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BIRD-WAYS

BY

Mrs. OLIVE THORNE MILLER

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The Bird is not in its ounces and inches, but in its relations to Nature; and the skin or skeleton you show me is no more a heron, than a heap of ashes or a bottle of gases into which his body has been reduced, is Dante or Washington. — EMERSON.

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INTRODUCTORY.

In offering to bird-lovers these studies from life, I wish to say that with the exception of an incident or two — properly credited — everything herein recorded came under my own observation, and is literally and entirely true so far as the fact is concerned; I may have sometimes misunderstood the motives of the little actors in the drama, but the account of their actions may be implicitly relied upon.

Also I should like to explain how a lover of free birds can endure to keep them in confinement. Each inhabitant of a cage in my house has been liberated from the positive discomforts of a bird-store, and besides the unwearied effort to make their lives happy and as free as possible in a room, the moment one shows a desire

for the world outside my windows, he is gladly allowed to depart.

Chapter V. is reprinted from "Harper's Magazine," by courtesy of the proprietors.

OLIVE THORNE MILLER.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

I. The Bird of the Morning 1
American Robin. *Turdus migratorius.*

II. The Bird of Solitude 13
Wood Thrush. *Turdus mustelinus.*

III. A Gentle Spirit 31
Wood Thrush.

IV. A Winter Bird-Study 41
European Song Thrush. *Turdus musicus.*

V. In the Cat-Bird's Nook 61
Cat-bird. *Mimus Carolinensis.*

VI. "Tricks and Manners" of a Cat-Bird . . 73

VII. The Bird of Society 93
Redwing Blackbird. *Agelæus phœniceus.*

VIII. Upon the Tree-Top 109
Baltimore Oriole. *Icterus galbula.*

IX. Transient Guests in the Bird-Room . . . 131

X. A Ruffian in Feathers 151
House Sparrow. *Passer domesticus.*

XI. A Tragedy in the Maple-Tree 16
House Sparrow.

XII. Trouble in the Honeysuckles 173
House Sparrow.

XIII. The Bird of the Street 183
House Sparrow.

XIV. These are your Brothers 201
House Sparrow.

THE BIRD OF THE MORNING.

"The bird for all Nature chants the morning hymn and the benediction of the day. He is her priest and her augur, her divine and innocent voice." — MICHELET.

I.

THE BIRD OF THE MORNING.

If every bird has his vocation, as a poetical French writer suggests, that of the American robin must be to inspire cheerfulness and contentment in men. His joyous "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheery! Be cheery! Be cheery!" poured out in the early morning from the top branch of the highest tree in the neighborhood, is one of the most stimulating sounds of spring. He must be unfeeling indeed who can help deserting his bed and peering through blinds till he discovers the charming philosopher, with head erect and breast glowing in the dawning light, forgetting the cares of life in the ecstasy of song.

Besides admonishing others to cheerfulness, the robin sets the example. Not only is his cheering voice the first in the morning and the last at night, — of the day birds, — but no rain is wet enough to dampen his spirits. In a drizzly, uncomfortable day, when all other birds

go about their necessary tasks of food-hunting in dismal silence, the robin is not a whit less happy than when the sun shines; and his cheery voice rings out to comfort not only the inmates of the damp little home in the maple, but the owners of waterproofs and umbrellas who mope in the house.

The most delightful study of one summer, not long ago, was the daily life, the joys and sorrows, of a family of robins, whose pretty castle in the air rested on a stout fork of a maple-tree branch near my window. Day by day I watched their ways till I learned to know them well.

The seat chosen for observations was under a tree on the lawn, which happened to be the robin's hunting-ground; and here I sat for hours at a time, quietly looking on at his work, and listening to the robin talk around me; the low, confidential chat in the tree where the little wife was busy, the lively gossip across the street with neighbors in another tree, the warning "Tut! tut!" when a stranger appeared, the war cry when an intruding bird was to be driven away, and the joyous "Pe-e-p! tut, tut, tut!" when he alighted on the fence and surveyed the lawn before him, flapping his wings and jerking his tail with every note.

In truth, the sounds one hears in a robin

neighborhood are almost as various as those that salute his ear among people: the laugh, the cry, the scold, the gentle word, the warning, the alarm, and many others.

When I first took my seat I felt like an intruder, which the robin plainly considered me to be. He eyed me with the greatest suspicion, alighting on the ground in a terrible flutter, resolved to brave the ogre, yet on the alert, and ready for instant flight should anything threaten. The moment he touched the ground, he would lower his head and run with breathless haste five or six feet; then stop, raise his head as pert as a daisy, and look at the monster to see if it had moved. After convincing himself that all was safe, he would turn his eyes downward, and in an instant thrust his bill into the soil where the sod was thin, throwing up a little shower of earth, and doing this again and again, so vehemently that sometimes he was taken off his feet by the jerk. Then he would drag out a worm, run a few feet farther in a panic-stricken way, as though "taking his life in his hands," again look on the ground, and again pull out a worm; all the time in an inconsequent manner, as though he had nothing particular on his mind, and merely collected worms by way of passing the time.

So he would go on, never eating a morsel,

but gathering worms till he had three or four of the wriggling creatures hanging from his firm little beak. Then he would fly to a low branch, run up a little way, take another short flight, and thus having, as he plainly intended by this zigzag course, completely deceived the observer as to his destination, he would slip quietly to the nest and quickly dispose of his load. In half a minute he was back again, running and watching, and digging as before. And this work he kept up nearly all day. In silence, too, for noisy and talkative as the bird is, he keeps his mouth shut when on the ground. In all my watching of robins for years in several places, I scarcely ever heard one make a sound when on the ground, near a human dwelling.

Once I was looking through blinds, and the bird did not see me. He had, after much labor, secured an unusually large worm, and it lay a few inches away where it fell as he gave it the final "yank." This was an extraordinary case; the robin was too full to hold in, and there bubbled out of his closed bill a soft "Cheery! cheery! be cheery!" hardly above a whisper and half frightened withal. Then snatching the trophy he flew away, doubtless to show his luck, and tell his tale at home.

The robin has been accused of being quarrel-

some; and to be sure he does defend his home with vigor, driving away any bird which ventures to alight on his special maple-tree, sometimes with a loud cry of defiance, and again without a sound, but fairly flinging himself after the intruder so furiously that not even the king-bird — noted as a tyrant over much larger birds — can withstand him. But jealous as he is of his own, he is equally ready to assist a neighbor in trouble. One day while I was studying him a great uproar arose in the orchard. Robin voices were heard in loud cries, and instantly those near the house took wing for the scene of distress. With my glass I could see many robins flying about one spot, and diving one after another into the grass, where there was a great commotion and cries of some other creature, — I thought a hen. The robins were furious, and the fight grew very warm, while every now and then a small object was tossed into the air.

Hurrying down to the scene of the warfare, I found that the creature in the grass was a hen-turkey with one chick. She was wild with rage, shaking and tossing up what looked like another young turkey, and the robins, evidently taking the side of the victim, were delivering sharp pecks and scolding vigorously. Securing with some difficulty the object of her fury, I

found it to be a young robin, which had fallen from a nest, and which, no doubt, the usually meek turkey thought threatened danger to her own infant.

The poor little fellow was too badly hurt to live, and although the turkey was removed, some time passed before calmness was restored to the neighborhood. It seemed to me that the chatter in the trees that evening was kept up longer than usual, and I fancied that every little youngster still living in the nest heard the direful tale, and received a solemn warning.

I was surprised to discover, in my close attention to them, that although early to rise, robins are by no means early to bed. Long after every feather was supposed to be at rest for the night, I would sit out and listen to the gossip, the last words, the scraps of song, — different in every individual robin, yet all variations on the theme "Be cheery," — and often the sharp "He he he he he!" so like a girl's laugh, out of the shadowy depths of the maple.

Once I saw a performance that looked as if the robin wanted to play a joke "with intent to deceive." Hearing a strange bird-note, as usual I hastened to my post. From the depths of a thick chestnut-tree came every moment a long-drawn-out, mournful "S-e-e-e-p!" as though some bird was calling its mate. It was

not very loud, but it was urgent, and I looked the tree over very carefully with my opera-glass before I caught sight of the culprit, and was amazed to see the robin. The tone was so entirely unlike any I ever heard from him that I should not have suspected him even then, but I saw him in the very act. No sooner did he notice that he was observed than he gave a loud mocking "He he he!" and flew across the lawn to his own tree.

One morning he was not to be seen at his usual work, but a furious calling came from the other side of the lawn. It was anxious and urgent, and it was incessant. I resolved to see what was the matter. Stealing quietly along, I came in sight of the bird, loudly calling, fluttering his wings, and in evident trouble, though I could not imagine the cause, until looking closely I saw perched on a branch of a cedar-tree a fat, stupid-looking bird, fully as big as the robin, and covered with feathers, but with a speckled breast, and no tail worth mentioning.

There he sat, like a lump of dough, head down in his shoulders, and bill sticking almost straight up, and neither the tenderest coaxing nor the loudest scolding moved him in the least. In fact, I thought he was dead, till the opera-glass showed that he winked. But stupid as he looked, he was the darling of the heart in that

little red breast, and the parent fluttered wildly about while I found a stick, and jarred the branch slightly as a gentle hint that he should obey his papa. That started the youngster, and away he flew, as well as anybody, to the other side of the walk.

Wondering why the mother did not take part in this training, I peeped into the nest, where I found her sitting, and I concluded she must be raising a second family. It was indeed time for that grown-up baby to learn to care for himself, before there was another family to feed. While I was looking at the nest and its frightened yet brave little owner, the young robin came back and alighted on the ground, and so proud and happy yet so anxious a parent is rarely seen. It was soon evident that this was Master Robin's first lesson in the worm business; he was now to be taught the base of supplies, and I kept very quiet while the scene went on. The father would hop ahead a few feet and call persuasively, "Come on!" The awkward youngling answered loudly, "Wait! wait!" Then he would hop a few steps, and papa would dig up a worm to show him how, and tenderly offer it as a slight lunch after his exertion. So they went on, that clumsy and greedy youngster induced by his desire for worms, while the patient teacher encouraged,

and worked for him. As for making an effort for himself, the notion never entered his head.

Not long after I saw one of the same brood seated on a twig and asking to be fed. I was quite near, and the robin papa hesitated to come. Master Robin called more and more sharply, drawing up his wings without opening them, exactly like a shrug of the shoulders, and jerking his body in such a way that it looked like stamping his foot. It was a funny exhibition of youthful imperiousness, and resembled what in a child we call "spunkiness."

One of the most interesting entertainments of the later days was to hear the young bird's music lesson. In the early morning the father would place himself in the thickest part of the tree, not as usual in plain sight on the top, and with his pupil near him would begin, "Cheery! cheery! be cheery!" in a loud, clear voice; and then would follow a feeble, wavering, uncertain attempt to copy the song. Again papa would chant the first strain, and baby would pipe out his funny notes. This was kept up, till in a surprisingly short time, after much daily practice both with the copy and without, I could hardly tell father from son.

The baby robin taken apart from his kind is an interesting study. Before he can fairly balance himself on his uncertain, wavering little

legs, or lay claim to more than the promise of a tail, he displays the brave, self-reliant spirit of his race. He utters loud, defiant calls, pecks boldly at an intruding hand, and stands — as well as he is able — staring one full in the face without blinking, asserting by his attitude and by every bristling feather that he is a living being, — he too has an "inalienable right to life, liberty, etc.;" and, in the depths of your soul, you cannot gainsay him. If you have already, in his helpless infancy, made him captive, the blush of shame arises, and you involuntarily throw wide the prison doors.

To return to my study; when the maple leaves turned in the fall, and the little home in the tree was left empty and desolate, I had it brought down to examine. It was a curious and remarkably well-made nest, being a perfect cup of clay, a little thicker around the top, well moulded, and covered inside and out with dry grass. This snug cottage of clay has been the scene of some of the sweetest experiences of all lives, great as well as small. For the happiness it has held I will preserve it: and thus moralizing I placed it on a bracket in memory of a delightful study of the Bird of the Morning.

THE BIRD OF SOLITUDE

"The little bird sits at his door in the sun
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels her eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest.
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?"

LOWELL.

II.

THE BIRD OF SOLITUDE.

When from some deep, secluded wood you hear the rich, flute-like notes of a "bird in the solitude singing," turn instantly from the path, follow in silence that enticing voice, and you may at last come near the mysterious songster. If, happily, you are able to locate sound, you may be further charmed by sight of him, glowing with musical ardor; but if not, you may search the woods vainly, so motionless is he, and so completely do the soft tints of his plumage harmonize in coloring with the branch upon which he stands. He is worthy this careful following: he is the most beautiful, the finest in song, and the noblest in character of the winged order in America. He is the wood thrush.

Sometimes, when you thus come upon him, you will find madam his spouse upon a lower branch of the same tree. She will not fly; wild panic is not in the thrush. She will stand and look at you, expressing her disapproval by

a lively "quit! quit!" at the same time raising the feathers of head, neck, and shoulders, till she appears to be adorned with a high ruff and shoulder cape. If you refuse to take the hint and move away, she will finally drop her voice into a low "tut, tut," showing her excitement by quick, nervous jerks of both wings and tail. After a little, her demonstrations will bring to her side the beautiful singer himself. Like a feather he alights on the branch, the perfect copy of his mate. A few low remarks, evidently derogatory to you, are exchanged, and away they fly together.

Should you come too near the singer, when alone, or should something in your manner arouse his suspicions, he will slip down behind the tree or shrub he is on, and depart so silently and so near the ground that you neither see nor hear him. The first intimation of his flight will be his song afar off, when it will seem to you that he is a phantom, a mere wandering voice.

The song of this bird defies description, though it has inspired both extravagant and poetical attempts in the most prosaic of writers. When heard from a distance, it sounds very deliberate: a succession of detached passages, with frequent pauses, ending in a trill, sometimes easily distinguished as such, but often so rapidly delivered that it resembles the syllable

"che-e-e" with a peculiar and indescribable thrill in it. If you are near, however, you will find the pauses filled with low notes, having, apparently, no connection with the song. One cannot but fancy them to be irrepressible words of endearment, ineffably sweet and tender, and wonderfully enhancing the charm of the performance.

He is not chary of his gift. He sings at all hours of the day, excepting in the heat of noon; but he seems most keenly to enjoy the fading light of afternoon and the evening, till long after dark. Not a little of the mystery and melancholy that poetical minds find in his music is due to the thoughtful twilight hours in which it is heard. It is in itself far from sadness. Indeed, there can be no more perfect picture of deep joy than this beautiful bird, standing tranquilly on his branch, while giving slow utterance to notes that thrill your soul.

The weather is a matter of no moment to the wood thrush; he has a soul above externals. Other birds may be full of song, or moping on their perches; be it wet or dry, sunshine or shade, he sings, and sings, and sings.

> "Howsoe'er the world goes ill,
> The thrushes still sing in it."

The strongest attraction of a certain summer

home in the heart of the Allegheny Mountains is the song of this bird. Around the house feathered visitors are always numerous, but no wood thrush is ever seen. Late in the afternoon, however, when other songsters are settling themselves for the night, and, save the robin chatter, no sound of bird is heard, out of the deep woods which surround the small clearing comes the stirring evening hymn of the thrush. It begins with a clear, far-off prelude of three notes on an ascending scale; then a deliberate rest, followed by three other and different notes, and ending in a rapturous trill. After a decorous pause another takes up the strain. There is no haste, no interruption, never a clamor of song. Each one enjoys his full length of time, and though there may be a dozen singers within hearing, there is no confusion. Each rich solo is a complete whole, perfect as a pearl. To sit on a balcony of that house through the long, tranquil hours of approaching night, listening to the grand and lofty symphony, is a never-to-be-forgotten experience; lifting the soul above the earth, into regions of poetry and dreams.

The wood thrush is said to be so enamored of solitude and deep woods that he may be often heard, but seldom seen. This is simply because few know how to look for him. He

does love the woods, but, being a remarkably intelligent bird, he is not shy, and unreasoning fright is unknown to him. He will let you approach quite near, fixing his soft, bright eyes upon you without agitation, to learn whether your object be peace or war. If you pause at a respectful distance and remain quiet, he will resume his song, undisturbed.

Then the position he selects is favorable to concealment. The robin and oriole pour out their melodies from the topmost twig of the tallest tree, in plain sight of all the world, and the cat-bird, while choosing the deepest seclusion of a shrub, keeps so constantly in motion that he cannot escape discovery. The thrush does neither. He perches upon a branch, rarely a twig. It is often the lowest branch of a tree, and quite near to the trunk. In several years of close study of the thrush, following the song and watching many singers, I have but once seen one sing at the top of a tree, though it is true that my observations were usually in the broad daylight; for the evening song it is possible that he may select a higher position.

The secret of hiding, which his inconspicuous coloring as well as his position aid, is his habit of repose. He has no frivolous flirt of the tail, like the cat-bird; no jerking body, like the robin; no incessant twitter, like the hosts

of smaller birds. It is his instinct, in moments of excitement, to remain motionless and perfectly silent. If you do not look exactly at him, you may almost put your hand upon him before he stirs; and even then he will glide away almost as noiselessly as a snake.

The easiest way to discover the bird in his open hiding-place is to take an opera-glass, and, having placed him as nearly as possible by ear, look carefully over every branch of the tree, till you come upon him, often so near and so plainly in sight that you are amazed at your own blindness. Nevertheless, if you remove the glass from your eye without having minutely noted his surroundings, you will not easily find him again.

If then, keeping him in full view, you remain quiet, he will accept your attitude as one of peace, and pay no more attention to you, and you may watch him as long as you choose; listening to the little ripples of talk, the low, sighing "wee-o," not unlike the cat-bird's "mew," the rich "tut-tut," and the soft responses of his mate, perhaps brooding over the lovely treasure of the home in the dogwood-tree, perhaps standing, as motionless and hard to see as her spouse, on a neighboring branch.

You may chance thus to observe him after the morning bath, in which he delights; per

forming his toilet, smoothing every perfect plume, or sunning himself, puffed out like a ball, with every feather on end. You may see him, too, when suddenly his attention is arrested by some movement or sound at the foot of the tree, imperceptible to your coarser senses; and he dives off the branch, returning instantly with a worm or grub, which he will hold in his bill a long time, entirely undisturbed by its wriggles or struggles, till he makes up his mind whether you mean mischief, or have changed your position while he was engaged.

Then, too, you may sometimes chance upon a scene of agitation even in the serene life of a thrush. Following an unfamiliar call far away from the path, in a lonely spot, I came once upon a singular sight: six or eight thrushes hopping about in the lower branches of a small tree, in a way very unusual with them, giving unceasing utterance to the sound I had heard, a low, shuddering cry, and all with eyes fixed upon the ground. Every moment or two one would fly away, but its place was instantly filled by another, so that the number in the tree remained the same, and the strange cry was never still. Nestlings were all out, so I knew that it could be no accident to a little one that thus aroused them, and I stole quietly

nearer through the tall weeds, where I found, crouching in this ample shelter, the cause of the excitement, — a cat, doubtless on breakfast intent. On seeing me she ran, and every bird followed, hovering over her wherever she placed herself; and as long as I stayed, that day, I could tell the whereabouts of poor puss by the tumult above her.

Because of its quiet tints, the beautiful plumage of the wood thrush is often underrated. Nothing can be more attractive than the soft cinnamon browns of his back and wings, and the satiny white of breast and under parts, tinged in places with buff, and decorated profusely with lance-shaped spots of brown.

Lovers of birds alive and free have reason to rejoice that our most interesting birds are not gaudy in coloring. The indiscriminate and terrible slaughter of these beautiful creatures, to appear in some horrible, unnatural position on ladies' hats, is surely enough to make the most long-suffering lover of nature cry out in grief and pain. To me — let me say it frankly — they look not like an adornment of feathers, but like the dead bodies of birds, foully murdered to minister to a passing fashion.

There is one interesting peculiarity of coloring in the breast feathers of this bird. Snowy white as they appear on the outside, they are

for three quarters of their length a dark slate color, so that where the plumage is parted in performing the toilet, it looks like black plush. Closely examined, too, with a common magnifying-glass, every tiniest barb of the feather is found to be ringed, dark slate and white, an exquisitely beautiful object.

I know of no bird with more strongly marked character than the wood thrush. First to be noticed is his love of quiet. Not only does he prefer the solitary parts of the woods, but he especially avoids the neighborhood of his social cousin, the robin. The chattering, the constant noise, the curiosity, the general fussiness, of that garrulous bird are intolerable to his more reposeful relative. He may be found living harmoniously among many varieties of smaller birds, and he even shows no dislike of the catbird; but come into a robin haunt, and you may look in vain for a wood thrush.

Then his gravity. When a thrush has nothing to do, he does nothing. He scorns to amuse himself with senseless chatter, or aimless flitting from twig to twig. When he wants a worm, he seeks a worm, and eats it leisurely; and then he stands quietly till he wants another, or something else. Even in the nest the baby thrush is dignified. No clamor comes from this youngster when his parent approaches

with food. On such occasions the young robin calls vociferously, jerks himself about, flutters his wings, and in every way shows the impatience of his disposition. The young thrush sits silent, quivering with expectation, while the parent, slightly lifting the wings, pops the sweet morsel into the waiting mouth; but no impatience and no cries.

There is, however, a time when the thrush is somewhat noisy, — when the young are in danger. One day, while slowly walking through a secluded path, in a piece of woods beloved of thrushes, I came suddenly upon a young thrush, almost under my hand. It was sitting in the forks of a branch, three feet from the ground, perfectly motionless, but watching me intently. I brought my hand down carefully, and just as it was closing — softly, for fear of injury — the little creature slipped out from under, and disappeared in the bushes. The parents, as soon as it escaped, began loud though not harsh cries; perhaps to distract my attention, perhaps to direct or cheer the little one. I have no doubt that the youngster was crouched in plain sight not three feet from where I stood; but although I searched every inch of ground, not a glimpse did I get of it, in spite of my assurance that it was near all the time.

The wood thrush is very decided in his taste

about his surroundings. He prefers woods where no grass grows, since he never seeks his worms in the sod, as does the robin. No lawn, however tempting, is the scene of his labors. In a certain park where I have frequently watched him, he is bold in looking for food; coming within three feet of a person while gathering the crumbs he has learned to expect on the walks, and though keeping a watchful eye upon one, not disturbed so long as the observer is still. But when this variation upon his usual fare is secured, he retires to a spot more remote from park frequenters, to sing, and in due time to establish his home.

He is one of the most intelligent of our birds, and absolutely seems to reason. He plainly does not take your motives for granted, but reserves his decision till he has studied you or has seen some indication of your intentions. He looks you squarely in the face, with perfect calmness; not turning his head on one side, and never becoming uneasy under your most steady gaze. He is graceful and elegant in movement and refined in his manners, and every one who has attentively observed birds will know that these are genuine distinctions.

Then he is a paragon of good temper. One cannot conceive of a thrush as ruffled with passion, quarreling with his neighbor, or driving

a strange bird away. One cannot imagine a harsh sound out of that "most musical" throat. And aside from fancy, as a simple matter of fact, I have never noticed the smallest sign of temper or harshness. Even the cries of distress have peculiar richness of tone.

Having for some years lovingly studied the ways of this little creature, and wishing to observe him more closely, I desired to add a wood thrush to the birds which fly about my house. To this end I made a tour of the bird stores of New York, and thus I learned, from disgusted dealers, another interesting characteristic of the high-spirited fellow. So fond is he of liberty that he will not sing in confinement. His European cousin, the song thrush (or throstle of England), unfortunately for his freedom, reconciles himself more easily to captivity, and is to be found in all shops. My answers were a disappointing monotony: "The American thrush is no good; he will not sing," — an opinion, by the way, in which these practical gentry differ from Audubon, who is quoted as saying that they sing nearly as well in confinement as when free. This is hard to believe. The thrush's song seems more than that of any other bird to embody the spirit of freedom, and to come from an untroubled soul.

In my search, however, I chanced upon an

other American thrush, the hermit thrush. He also is not a regular bird-store product, being neither gay-colored nor noisy. This individual was caught with an injured wing, and was so little regarded in that motley collection of screaming parrots and shrieking canaries that the price put upon him was insultingly low. To soften my disappointment, I brought him home, and a more interesting fellow I never saw.

Upon opening the box in which he had made the journey, he showed not the least alarm. He sat calmly on the bottom and looked at me. In a moment or two he hopped on to the edge of the box, and then, seeing a perch conveniently near, he stepped upon that, and began to straighten his feathers and put himself in order.

He had been in captivity but two or three days, yet he was never for an instant wild, and was the most quiet bird in the house. He seldom made a sound. Occasionally he uttered a high, sharp "s-e-e-p," like an insect sound, without opening the bill; and that was all, until he encountered the looking-glass.

Having kept him in a cage a few days, to teach him that it was his home, I opened the door, as I do with all my cages. He came out at once, which birds rarely do, investigated my

room without fear, alighting on my chair, taking worms from the hand, trying to make friends with an English song thrush, twice his size, — meeting, by the way, with no response, — and finding his way back to his cage without trouble, which again is unusual.

As with all birds, the pincushion was a source of interest to him, and I was interested to see how differently from any other he treated the obnoxious pinheads. He did not pounce upon them, driving them farther in, as did the catbird, but he seized each head in his bill, and tried to jerk it out. This would have been somewhat too successful, only that his efforts were in a sidewise direction, and of course the pins would not come. In a few days, however, he learned how to manage them, when his great pleasure was to pull them all out and throw them on the floor, leaning over the edge of the bureau to hear each one fall on the matting, and then to go down himself, and pass each one through his bill from head to point, exactly as he did a meal-worm before swallowing it. The stiffness of the pins discouraged him; he never tried to make a meal of them.

His experience with the looking-glass was most melancholy, till I covered it up, in pity.

The instant he caught sight of himself, — of his own reflection, rather, — he would drop his

wings, raise head and tail, and in that curious position strut around before the glass; calling softly, with the sweetest and most tender twittering, though so low it could scarcely be heard. After some time of this coaxing, he would become disheartened, and stand motionless, with feathers puffed out, staring at the bird in the glass, and looking so grieved and unhappy that I could not endure it, but drew a shield before that misleading piece of furniture.

He never showed the least fear of me, and grew more familiar every day. But I had him only a month. One evening he was well and lively as usual; the next morning I found him dead on the floor, to my great surprise and grief.

A GENTLE SPIRIT.

"With what a clear
And ravishing sweetness sang the plaintive thrush!
I love to hear his delicate rich voice,
Chanting through all the gloomy day, when loud
Amid the trees is dropping the big rain,
And gray mists wrap the hills; for aye the sweeter
His song is when the day is sad and dark."

LONGFELLOW.

III.

A GENTLE SPIRIT.

SOME months after my experience with the hermit thrush, I had the good fortune to come into possession of a wood thrush, and for nearly half a year now have had him under constant observation. I find in his ways nothing to contradict what I have said of his wild relatives, but something to add to that record.

My bird has a lovely gentleness of disposition, which has ample opportunity to show itself in a room with three or four companions. Tranquillity is his delight, and for sweet peace he will accept many discomforts. I know it is genuine love of quiet, and not cowardice, because his conduct is the same with a tiny goldfinch as with the birds of his own size.

Twice has the amiable fellow changed his residence to please a neighbor. When he came to me he had been frightened by confinement in a box, and had beaten his tail feathers out in his struggles, so that he looked very droll;

but what was worse, he could not guide himself well in flight. To facilitate his getting in and out of his cage, I put up a light and dainty ladder, from the floor to his door. This pleased him greatly, and he used it constantly.

After the thrush had become perfectly at home, I added to the family a new bird, somewhat larger than himself — a Mexican thrush. Upon opening the door of the stranger's cage, and inducing him to come out and get acquainted with us (which I did with some difficulty and much coaxing), I discovered that he, too, had suffered at the hands of men. He had lost two or three feathers from his wing, so that while not in the least disfigured, he found it hard to get about. He almost immediately learned to make use of the thrush's doorsteps, and after a day or two made up his mind to live in a house so convenient to reach, and quietly took possession. Once or twice the rightful owner approached the door, but seeing his place occupied calmly retired to the usurper's cage, and contentedly remained there, showing neither anger nor sulkiness. Of course I attended to his comfort, and provided a second ladder for his use, hoping that the Mexican would return to his own quarters. But he was satisfied where he was, and disdained to touch the new ladder.

The wood thrush was well settled and at home in the Mexican's cage, when a mocking-bird came to live in the room. Strange to say, no sooner did the latter bird gain the freedom of the place than he coolly made choice of the thrush's second home for his own. The gentle bird was not disturbed; seeing how matters stood with his new neighbor he quickly reconciled himself to the mocking-bird's discarded residence and was happy as ever. Now, after many weeks, the mocking-bird will occupy sometimes one, sometimes the other of the two cages (which stand side by side), but the thrush is always perfectly contented to accept either, and make himself at home wherever he finds an empty cage.

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I might think this cowardice — as I said — but for his treatment of a little English goldfinch, who is as saucy in this company of birds five or six times as large as himself as though his neighbors were of his own size. He does not hesitate to alight beside the thrush, standing motionless in thrush fashion, on top of his own cage. This conduct is not agreeable to the proprietor; he turns and looks at the puny intruder, and then starts towards him, as a gentle hint that his company is not desired in that spot. The small bird not only refuses to move, but actually begins to scold. The thrush draws

nearer and nearer, the goldfinch scolds louder and louder, shaking his wings and swelling himself to look as formidable as possible to one of his few inches. I have seen them stand ten minutes, not three inches apart, the smaller bird scolding, chattering, and even uttering snatches of song, while the thrush simply gazes at him, with crown feathers erect, and feet well apart in attitude of "going for him." Words could not be plainer than his manner, which says, "How that little rascal can have the impertinence to defy me on my own ground, I cannot understand;" and, as though it were a puzzle he determined to solve, he will stand and stare, looking at his small foe from head to foot, even touching his bill with his own in an experimental sort of way, while the goldfinch, slightly puffed out, ready for flight if the enemy becomes threatening, twitters and scolds, and sings a little now and then.

There is one thing in which the thrush shows a little selfishness. Apple is his greatest treat. He gets it in small slices on the floor, and he cannot endure to see one in the possession of another bird. No matter how fresh may be his own, to see a bit given to a neighbor arouses the only passion I have seen in him. Instantly he abandons the piece he has, and starts for the other, running so rapidly across the floor that

he is unable to stop, but slides past the spot, on the matting. The Mexican successfully resists his attempt to possess himself of the new piece; the mocking-bird at first quailed before so furious an onslaught, but later learned to protect his own property, although for a few days the thrush would retain possession of three pieces in three parts of the room, by driving away the mocking-bird from each in turn. In every other thing, even meat, of which he is exceedingly fond, he is willing to share.

When I enter the bird-room with a piece of fresh beef in one hand, and the scissors (with which I cut it into tiny strips like a mealworm) in the other, the thrush will fly to my hand, alight beside the meat, and stand there while I feed all three in succession. If the Mexican is at liberty I have trouble, for he is both greedy and savage. He tries to snatch, fiercely pecks my hand if I give to another what he wants himself, and lastly flings himself upon the bird he chooses to consider his rival. Since he is the largest and strongest in the room, all fly before him. Consequently I distribute the meat while he is still behind the bars of the cage.

In another way the thrush shows that he is not a coward. He goes down into the waste-basket, and of all the birds I have kept, he

is the only one who has dared to do that. Heretofore that receptacle has been a safe place for anything denied to birds. No matter how tempting the article, I knew that in the waste-basket, away from the outside, it would not be touched. But all that is past: the thrush calmly drops into the mass of papers and rubbish which usually half fills the basket, and seeks the bit of apple or bread, or whatever has pleased his fancy from the edge, and even turns over the contents in search of treasures.

Gentle, amiable, and friendly as is my thrush, spending much time on the back of my chair, my desk, my shoulder and even my hand, he does not like to be taken in the hands, as indeed no bird does. Once or twice it has become necessary for me to do so, and on such occasions he expresses his mind plainly. The first time I caught him, he had stayed out too long, and as it was growing dark he could not get home. I quietly walked up to him where he stood on the window, and before he suspected my intention closed my hands over him. He was not frightened, but indignant, and at once turned his bill towards me, and reproached me for the liberty in a few emphatic remarks — a modification of his usual liquid "Chook, chook, chook," into "Chack, chack, chack."

This interesting bird has never given me a

note of his wild song in the cage (perhaps because it is winter) but he sometimes adds his voice to the chorus in the room, in a low whispered twittering, very sweet, but very unsatisfactory. The most unexpected sound he makes is a sort of low squeal — I can call it nothing else — over something he very much likes, as a bit of apple or meat. He clatters his bill, as other thrushes, when startled or annoyed. He was very intelligent in learning his name, and is the only bird in the room now who will come when called.

There is a curious circumstance about the spots on his breast. They seem scattered without any attempt at regularity all over the lower parts as far back as his legs, a little less thickly perhaps in the middle, but at night, when he is puffed out into a ball, the spots form three regular, unbroken lines on each side, meeting under the chin, and sweeping away to right and left in graceful curves. Looking at him from the front, he bears no little resemblance to the prow of a broad ship, with three well defined brown lines down each side, and perfectly white in every other part.

Among the many unknown habits of the thrush is one in which I feel a peculiar interest. It is this: what mysteries do wild thrushes perform at early morning, with the first streaks of

light, to make them so uneasy, so restless at that time in a cage? No matter how amiable, how happy, how tame a thrush may be, in that mystic hour he is a contented pet no longer; he is a wild, unsatisfied being, full of longings and emotions he cannot express — at least to you. In that moment one must realize that he cannot tame the soul; he may confine the body, but the wild, free spirit looks out through the eyes even of a wood thrush.

A WINTER BIRD-STUDY

"And still when winter spreads around
The chilly covering of the snow,
And woods in dreary silence bound,
No more with sounds of joy o'erflow,
Beside my hearth I sit and hear
The same sweet music ringing clear,
And summer-time within I know."

CALDWELL

IV.

A WINTER BIRD-STUDY.

WHEN the "autumnal gale moans sadly" through the groves, stripping the leafy shelter from their homes and scattering the feathered folk abroad, the lover of bird-life must look indoors, must study the inhabitants of sunny rooms where summer prevails the year around, and only the four walls confine.

All winter under these favorable conditions I have studied a song thrush or throstle of England, and although in some respects not so attractive in disposition as the American wood thrush, he is still a most interesting bird. It is well known, in this day, that among birds as among people character differs in individuals; I do not claim to have studied the song thrush, but simply *one* song thrush, a captive in my room.

The most noticeable characteristic of my bird is his timidity. He is afraid of the dark, or perhaps I should say of the half-dark. When

evening approaches, even — in winter — so early as four o'clock, he begins to throw uneasy glances around the room, and peer anxiously into the shaded corners as though in search of some terrible bugaboo. Should it chance to be cloudy and dark even at noonday, he will display great nervousness, starting at the slightest sound, and stretching his neck to look in every obscure place with an air so mysterious that one cannot but turn to see if there be really nothing there. Many birds show dread of the shadowy corners of a room, but none that I have seen is so sensitive as the song thrush. For this reason, at four P. M. his door is closed for the night, and a little later, as the darkness grows, begins a curious performance, apparently an attempt to try all possible ways of going over and under and around his five perches. He will first descend to the floor by means of three perches like a flight of steps, run madly across the cage and spring to the upper perch from the outside, where there is hardly room next to the wires, then jump excitedly back and forth on the two upper perches, down the steps again and up the other side, sometimes omitting the middle perch altogether, as a boy likes to pass over every alternate step in hastening down stairs, and this exercise varied in every imaginable way for an

hour at a time. The same thing occurs in the dim light of early morning, with so much violence and noise that I am obliged to remove his cage to a dark room where daylight comes only when the door is opened.

The timidity of this bird is shown also in his manner of examining a strange object. If on the floor, he will hop around it at a respectful distance, viewing it from every side. For a long time he will not approach, and when he does, it is with the greatest caution, prepared for instant flight if it develops unexpected hostility. I once threw on the floor a small ball of yarn with the end unwound about four inches and fastened in that position. The thrush is exceedingly fond of a string, and this one was attractive. He hopped around it with interest, gradually drew nearer, and after some time ventured to take hold of it. He was evidently not yet satisfied about the nature of the ball, and intended to drag the string away from the suspicious neighborhood. Accordingly he gave it a jerk, when to his horror the ball bounded towards him. The suddenness with which he dropped it and disappeared in the furthest corner under the bed was laughable. In spite of this experience, the string was irresistible, and in a few moments he returned. Again and again he tried to secure it, and again and again

he was panic-stricken at the conduct of the ball. Besides this, he is easily intimidated by other birds. The cat-bird was his terror. He would gaze on that mischievous fellow in some of his pranks, standing very straight up on his long legs with crown feathers erect, the picture of horror; while his two small feet, side by side, opposed to the bold stride of the cat-bird made him look like an innocent child in the presence of an impish elf. After the cat-bird's departure (I opened the window for him in the spring, when he grew restless and unhappy), the hermit thrush, half his size, could drive him anywhere about the room, and a red-wing blackbird is a nightmare to him, though that he is to all the birds.

So timid is this thrush that he was with great difficulty induced to leave his cage at all. He had to be starved to it, with food and water outside, and no bath till he would come out and take it. Two weeks passed before he would go in and out freely, and even now, after months of freedom, the slightest alarm sends him like a shot into his cage, where he instantly mounts the highest perch, and manifests intense excitement for some time.

The real bugaboo of my thrush's life, for which I always imagine he is searching the dusky corners, is a doll. Strange to say, this

joy of babyhood is an absolute terror to him, as I discovered quite by accident. While engaged in dressing one for a little friend, I observed that the bird was uneasy, and did not come near me as usual, but did not suspect the cause till he flew up to my desk, as was his constant habit, to receive his bit of bread from my hands. The doll was lying there, and the instant he saw it (before his feet had touched the desk), he flew violently away, uttering his loudest "Chook! chook! chook!" and took refuge in his cage, where he stood, flirting wings and tail in great excitement for ten minutes or more. I could not believe the doll had occasioned the panic, so when he had become quiet, I lifted it up and turned it towards him, ten or twelve feet away. He at once began jumping back and forth with the same agitation, and after further tests I was forced to conclude that he did not admire a doll.

Wishing to see how the bird would receive an animal, I placed on the floor a candy box, which was a very good imitation of an alligator a foot long. But I was not gratified by any display of interest or fear. He simply gave it the widest berth which the room would admit, and absolutely refused to "interview" the young monster.

Timid though he be, the thrush is inquisitive. He examines everything with close attention,

and the waste-basket is a source of as much interest to him as it was to the cat-bird, though he does not regard it in the same light. To the cat-bird it was a deep well containing treasures he longed to possess; to this bird it is a cage between whose bars he can pull its varied contents. He walks around it on the floor, inserts his bill and drags through the openings whatever he is able, pulling and tugging at them with all his might. After an absence of an hour or two from the room, I often find my waste-basket adorned with buttresses of paper, cloth, and other materials standing out on every side.

Another marked characteristic of my bird is his aversion to change. He is preëminently a creature of habit, and impatient of variations upon the established order of things. He has an exact knowledge of the arrangement of my room, and expresses the strongest disapproval of innovations. If I assume an apron or a shawl, he will not come near me; a pillow left at the foot of the bed disturbed him for an hour; the corner of a rug turned up gives him pain; a stiff leather string that fell with end sticking up instead of lying flat in the manner of strings annoyed him beyond expression; and he absolutely declined to change his lodgings, though I offered him a larger and better cage. Having taught him to come out of and

go into his cage when on the floor, he refused to fly up to it, though not more than one foot higher. I had to accustom him gradually, in this way: the first day or two I placed the cage upon one book; he hesitated, delayed, stayed out for hours, till hunger forced him to venture the little hop that reached the perch running out from his door. When used to that height, I inserted two books, and he repeated the performance. Thus gradually, and in the course of weeks, I induced him to fly as high as a common table to reach his door, but to this day he will starve before he will enter his cage when standing on top of a low bookcase, though he will fly to the top of it, or to the cornices over the windows, with ease. Also he never enters his door except from the right side; however it is placed, or wherever he may be when he starts for home, from the right alone will he go in. When in haste, he can fly across the room and into his door unerringly; but if at leisure, he describes a circle around the cage or the table it is on, approaches the door on the proper side, flies to the perch, and runs in.

The most amusing manifestation of my thrush's disapproval of change was his reception of a picture I pinned upon the wall. It was a highly-colored chromo about a foot

square. He went to it at once, standing on the floor and observing it with all a critic's airs, throwing back his head, turning it one side and the other, hopping back and forth before it, never removing his eyes, and expressing his opinion in the liveliest manner by a high-pitched insect-like "S-e-e-p," and a contemptuous flirt of the tail. For days these actions were repeated, until he became accustomed to it, and accepted it as a feature of the room.

This bird is remarkably intelligent. He learned to respond to his name more quickly than any of his fellows. He is wonderfully quick to suspect my intentions regarding worms or meat. The sight of the worm-cup brings him from his cage instantly, and since I have been feeding him raw beef instead, I cannot touch the scissors, with which I usually cut it into bits, without bringing him upon me ferociously hungry for his breakfast.

Finding that the thrush persisted in scattering his food when in open dishes, I removed them, and substituted some of a different style, from which he could not waste so much. He did not approve the change, but learned after a time to endure it, and I supposed he had forgotten all about it; but when I brought the old cups out for the use of a new bird, he recognized them at once. The cage was on the floor

and he hopped around it, excited, even furious, to see his property in the possession of another. He put his bill between the wires — though the tenant was the dreaded blackbird — and pulled and pushed and jerked, and in every way tried to get the dishes out; and when at last the enemy left the cage for a bath, he rushed in, flew to these cups, and scattered seed and water far and wide. He was in a terrible rage.

The looking-glass — heart-breaking to many birds — does not trouble the thrush. If he chances to alight where he catches sight of his own reflection, he utters a quiet "chook" or two, and stands a few minutes looking earnestly at the room "through the looking-glass," manifesting surprise, but no particular pain.

Introducing a new bird to the room is almost certain to arouse jealousy in the older residents. The thrush suffers from this feeling, though he never mopes or grieves over it, as do many birds; he is angry. If I feed the blackbird from the same hand that feeds him, he will give the offending member a violent peck, by way of reproof; when I offer hemp-seed to a seed-eater, the thrush instantly appears on the scene and greedily devours every seed he can secure, though he never touched them before, and swallows them now without shelling; and when he shows rage at my giving the black-

bird seed one at a time from my fingers, I offer him the cup to shame his greediness, but, nothing daunted, he attempts to choke down every one, till I take it away lest he hurt himself. Jealousy had, however, one unusual and pleasing effect on my bird; it made him suddenly tame. For the first time he alighted on my knee as I sat down with his meat in my hand. Finding himself comfortable, and not disturbed or annoyed by my presuming upon his confidence, he stayed a long time; next he perched on my shoulder, then my head, and, in fact, before six days were over he was almost troublesome in his familiarity. He would stand motionless an hour at a time on my knee or arm, watching the movements of my pen, taking an occasional lunch of bread from my fingers or lips, and apparently not in the least alarmed.

But familiarities must be all on the thrush's side. Should I attempt to bring my hand near him, except with an offering, or to touch even one toe, he will either fly away or show fight. He rapidly advanced from this attitude towards me to friendly relations with all the family, even a youth who likes to tease him, and to whom he always presents an open bill. When I lie down he stands like a guardian spirit on my arm or shoulder, or on the head-board of the bed, with the untiring patience of his race;

and when I write, he is half the time perched on the top of my writing tablet, sometimes so closely that I have to pull from under his feet each sheet as I use it. When I hold his meat, he snatches at the piece, tries to draw it away from me, and seizes every bit from the scissors as I cut it.

This thrush, being a ground bird, is fond of the floor. His favorite place is under the rocking-chair in which I sit, where he spends the greater part of the time between his frequent meals. At first I dared not move for fear of hurting him, but finding that he was never off his guard, I have gradually become perfectly indifferent as to his whereabouts, and rock and move as I choose. Under the bed is another chosen retreat.

The number and variety of attitudes a bird will assume are extremely interesting to observe. Every emotion is plainly expressed, not by the face as in the human family, but by the whole body. Feeling mere curiosity and interest in anything, he stands up perfectly erect with tail nearly touching the ground, a most beautiful attitude for a thrush. In surprise the feathers on top of his head gradually rise, and with the light circle defining his eye he looks as though transfixed with horror. I have spoken of the expression of legs; it is aston-

ishing, when one really notices them, to see how much is expressed by different positions of those members. The thrush, standing with feet side by side, looks the picture of innocence; the cat-bird, with his wide apart, one a little in advance of the other, is the personification of mischief; the blackbird, with one foot on a perch, and the other grasping the side of the cage six inches above, resembles terror almost amounting to panic, prepared to flee whichever way seems least dangerous.

Like many birds, the thrush expresses anger by lowering his head, making his body a horizontal object exactly the shape of an egg, with bill at one end and tail at the other; war is declared by a crouching position, in which he looks ready to spring.

The thrush's sun-bath is the drollest I have seen. Not only does he raise every feather on end and puff himself out three times his natural size, and round as a ball, but he leans over on one side to present the lower parts to the sunlight, slightly raises the wing on the upper side, droops his head, opens his mouth, and often closes his eyes. This looks like the last agony, but is supreme delight. Often during summer he may be seen on the floor in some spot where the sun falls, in this ludicrous position; but in winter he indulges in no such va-

garies; however warm the room, and however brightly the sun may shine, he keeps his plumage well down on his body.

Excitement and indignation are well and completely expressed by this bird, with wings and tail; the former emotion by short, sharp, upward jerks of the tail; the latter by equally energetic movements of both wings and tail. By jerk of the wings I mean lifting them slightly and bringing them down suddenly. His meaning is as plain as though he spoke.

The gait of the thrush is usually a hop; long hops from two to three feet in extent when in haste, and short ones on ordinary occasions. If feeling particularly well he will give an exaggerated little hop when wishing to move one inch forward, which is very pretty and graceful to see. When he carries a burden he walks or runs, holding his head well forward. If he succeeds in abstracting a thread from my waste-basket, he runs off with it in a most comical way.

The sounds my bird gives utterance to have no great variety; the above mentioned "s-e-e-p," like an insect noise, with closed bill, when greatly pleased, as during the bath; also when troubled, as by a piece of food too large to swallow; a louder, rich-toned "Chook! chook! chook!" when much excited and impatient;

and a sharp snap of the bill when on the war-path, which, repeated rapidly, resembles the rattle of castanets. His song is sweet, but very low, never uttered except when others are singing, and then so softly it can scarcely be heard. There is as great difference between singers in the feathered race as in our own; not all of us can be Campaninis.

In eating, this thrush is almost omnivorous. His usual fare — mocking-bird food — he constantly varies with bread, of which he is extremely fond, and which I am obliged to furnish of the exact quality he likes; he will not touch biscuit or cracker; the bread must be fresh and soft, in pieces not too small. If he does not approve of the morsel offered, he takes it, and immediately lets it fall. A large piece he breaks up by literally "wiping the floor" with it, holding it in his bill and rubbing first one side and then the other on the matting, till it crumbles and he can swallow it. In the same way he treats worms, fruit, and everything he chooses to eat. His taste is catholic in the extreme; not only does he like the above viands, but strings, threads, and little rolls of dust brought out from under furniture. He likes all fruits, especially grapes. After having supplied the place of meal-worms with bits of fresh beef a few times, he adopted the new food eagerly, re-

fused the worms, and was wild for the meat, which he will eat ravenously, till his crop stands out, and he really cannot swallow another morsel.

This bird's passion for strings is troublesome, since they always mat into a lump and must be thrown up; but worst of all is a fatal propensity for eating the hairs which, in spite of utmost care, he will now and then pick up on the floor. The first trouble is to get them down. He will swallow one end, and then be nearly mad with annoyance from the piece left hanging, shaking his head, rubbing his bill, and becoming greatly excited, but the notion of giving up the object never occurs to him. If it hangs down several inches I can often secure the end in my fingers, when a struggle at once ensues, he holding on to his end, and I to mine, till I win, which I always do, of course. On one occasion he swallowed the two ends of a hair, leaving a loop around his lower bill. It seemed as if he would be crazy, but I could not help him without catching him, which I never do unless important, for I don't wish my birds to associate any unpleasant experience with me. After he has collected in his internal reservoir as many threads, strings, hairs and so forth as he can hold, there comes a time when he mopes on his perch, sometimes for a day, unable to eat, hun-

gry yet full, fighting the inclination to disgorge, which, however, at last overpowers him, the lump as big as the end of one's little finger comes up, and he falls to his food with eagerness.

The thrush always has a serious time when he finds a string hanging, which he can reach yet not draw out. The tugs and jerks, the bracing of his firm little legs, and pulls that take him off his feet, are amusing to see, while his persistence is amazing. He will work a whole day on a large piece of twine which hangs within his reach, trying to pull it down, or to untwist the end so that he can eat it. Fringe of all sorts is too attractive to resist. He made a funny figure of himself one day when a towel was left hanging on the back of a chair. The fringe was a foot from the floor, and the bird would spring up to it, seize several threads in his bill, and attempt to carry them off. They would not come, and there he would hang, beating the air with both wings, and wildly grasping at nothing with both feet, swinging back and forth as he did so. In a moment he would drop to the floor exhausted, but very soon return to the charge, seizing, and swinging, and clawing as before. It was a laughable sight.

Now, as I write, the thrush stands on the desk before me looking with deepest interest at

my movements. His body is erect, his wings slightly drooped, and as he stands there motionless, with dark, earnest eyes fixed upon me, I cannot doubt his intelligence, nor that he has his own well-defined opinions about me. He seems at this moment to be gravely pondering the mysterious differences between us two, so friendly yet so far apart, so loving yet so unlike.

IN THE CAT-BIRD'S NOOK.

"Alas, dear friend, that, all my days,
Has poured from that syringa thicket
The quaintly discontinuous lays
To which I hold a season-ticket, —

"A season-ticket cheaply bought
With a dessert of pilfered berries, —
And who so oft my soul has caught
With morn and evening voluntaries."

LOWELL.

V.

IN THE CAT-BIRD'S NOOK.

In a secluded nook in a certain park many hours of last summer were passed in the absorbing study of the manners of the cat-bird.

So well hidden was that delightful spot, so narrow and rough the gate, and so attractive the shaded walk leading away from it, that it might have remained a secret to this day, unknown save to the birds and the squirrels; but a friendly cat-bird in a moment of confidence led me behind the veil of thick shrubs which screened it from intrusive visitors. I marked well the entrance, and day after day returned, at all hours, to study his ways in his chosen home. Each day's knowledge increased my respect and liking, no less than my surprise and indignation at the prejudice against him.

The morning our acquaintance began I had been watching his movements as he flitted about, now running madly across the walk, as though a legion of enemies were after him, now

pausing on the edge to see what I would do next, then retiring to a short distance under the trees, and having a lively frolic with last year's leaves, digging into them with great spirit, and throwing them far over his head. Suddenly he rose on wing, and flew, with tail wide spread, across the walk into an althea bush, where he disappeared.

I was about to pass on, when, fancying I heard a faint twittering in the shrub, I approached quietly till near enough to put my hand on him, before I saw him. There he sat on a branch about as high as my head, looking at me very sharply with his intelligent black eyes, but not in the least agitated. I stood still, and he went on with his song. It was a most extraordinary performance. The sweetest solo given with every trill and turn the bird can execute, with swelling throat and jerking tail, yet not a note louder than a whisper! I had to listen to catch the sound, although I could touch him where I stood. It was a genuine soliloquy. When he had finished he flew out the other side of the bush, and pushing my way between the althea and a close-growing wigelia, I found myself in his nook, a charming sunny spot, running down to the lake.

Though burdened with an undeserved and offensive name, and having somehow become

an object of suspicion and dislike to many persons, the cat-bird — *Galeoscoptes carolinensis* — is one of the most intelligent and interesting of our birds. No bird makes closer observation, or more correctly estimates one's attitude toward him. As I sit motionless in his nook he will circle around me, hopping from bush to bush, at a distance of ten or twelve feet, looking at me from every side, and at last slip behind a low shrub, and come out boldly upon the grass with an unconcerned air, entirely different from that with which he had kept me under surveillance for the last ten minutes.

The cat-bird has an inquiring mind; nothing escapes his eye, and everything is of interest to him. Far from being satisfied to accept anything as "mysterious," he wishes and intends to know the why and the wherefore of everything new or strange. After one has gained his confidence, to induce him to show himself on the grass it is only necessary to place there something new — a bit of paper, a small fruit, or anything unusual. From behind his screen of leaves he sees it, is at once seized with intense curiosity, and if not afraid he will almost instantly come down to inspect it. This he does by trying to stab it with his sharp black bill, jumping off the ground and pouncing on it, when it happens to be hard, till one fears he

will break his bill. A bit of apple treated by him is full of minute stabs or gashes like dagger thrusts. His manner, however, is not one of vulgar curiosity, but always of philosophical inquiry into the nature of substances, and his look is as grave and thoughtful as though he were studying some of the problems of human or bird life.

He has also a sense of humor. I had the fortune to see from my own window in the city an amusing exhibition of this quality. Hearing the sweet song of a cat-bird, I seized an opera-glass and looked over the neighboring yards till I found him perched on the roof of a pigeon-house, singing with great energy. Several pigeons were also on the roof, and seemed interested in the stranger entertaining them, stupidly — in pigeon fashion — walking about and looking at him, turning their heads from side to side in their mincing way. Suddenly, in the middle of a burst of song, the minstrel darted like a flash among them (evidently for pure fun, for he did not touch one of them) and returned instantly to his song. Wild panic, however, seized the pigeons, and although he was a mere atom among them, they flew every way, and would have shrieked with terror had they been able.

Then the sparrows began to observe him

They gathered near, in a cherry-tree and a lilac bush, chattering and scolding, and plainly questioning the right of the stranger to intrude upon their grounds. After a while one of them flew rapidly past the apparently unconcerned cat-bird, who interpolated one scolding note, without pausing in his song. This insult not being resented, the sparrow grew bolder, returned, and alighted on the roof near him. Wishing to finish his song, the cat-bird merely scolded a little, and put himself in a threatening attitude, when the sparrow considered it prudent to retire. For a few minutes there was great chattering in the cherry-tree, and the birds, having made up their minds that he could do nothing but scold, plainly resolved to mob him in true sparrow fashion. One led the way by flying down to the roof about two feet from the cat-bird, all bristled up ready for fight. This was too much; the song ceased, and with a fearful war-cry the singer fairly flung himself after that sparrow, who disappeared in a panic, and the whole party of mobbers with him. They very evidently appreciated their mistake, and saw that the stranger was willing as well as able to take care of himself, for neither sparrow nor pigeon came near him again, and when he returned to his perch, light as a feather and unruffled as a summer morning, he finished his

song at his leisure, and had the roof to himself as long as he chose to stay.

No bird is more graceful than the cat-bird, and in spite of his sober dress of slate-color and black, none is more beautiful. His plumage may be grave of hue, but it is like satin in sheen and texture, and always in the most perfect order, for he takes the daintiest care of himself. To see him make his toilet for the night is well worth staying late and eating a cold dinner. For an hour without ceasing will he plume himself, carefully dressing each feather many times over, combing his head with his claws again and again, and shaking with violent effort every atom of the day's dust from him. Then when all is arranged to his mind, and every feather in place, he fluffs himself out into a ball, draws one slate-colored foot up out of sight into its feather pillow, and is ready to say good-night and enjoy his repose.

Another sight, for which one must lose his breakfast — though it will be well exchanged — is his bath. The cat-bird loves water, and he plunges in, fluttering and spattering in a way to delight the soul of a "hydromaniac," wings and tail and head all hard at work, sprinkling everything for yards around, till when he steps out he looks like an animated rag-bag, and the long, careful toilet of the evening is repeated.

But the rarest of all is to see him take a sun-bath, and one is fortunate indeed to catch sight of him and not disturb him in his luxurious enjoyment. Each particular feather stands on end, even to the small ones of his crown, till he looks twice his usual size, and like a clumsy imitation of a bird made of feathers stuck loosely into a ball. More than this, he leans far over on one side, and lifts his wing so that the sunshine may penetrate to every part, while his mouth is half open and his eyes are closed in ecstasy. He is a strange-looking object; one would think him in great distress rather than enjoying a sunning.

It is interesting to watch the various attitudes this bird assumes. He even seems to change shape. Now he stretches up very tall, with neck lengthened and tail standing at an angle of forty-five degrees; again he crouches in a heap, and swells out till he resembles an exaggerated wren; something attracts his attention, and he leans forward with head and tail on a level with his body, and legs closely curled under him, till he looks from the front like a snake; a thought of mischief seizes him, and he drops his tail over on one side, lowers his head, spreads far apart his sturdy legs, and the looker-on may be sure that in a moment he will dart off to frighten away another bird, or play some lively prank.

No words can express contempt or a shrug of the shoulder better than a certain upward, sideways jerk of the tail and saucy twitch of the body which he will give to signify his opinion of the song of some other bird; wide-awake interest is never more clearly displayed than by the jerks of body and rustling switches of the tail with which he contemplates a strange sight. He is alive to the tips of his toes, every movement is so alert, so unexpected; he will start off as if intending to fly a mile, and bring up on the next twig, a foot away; standing quietly on a branch as though settled for life, suddenly, like a flash, he will slip off the other side, and dive after a berry or a worm his sharp eyes have seen.

I had a great desire to find a nest, so when I saw a cat-bird go several times in one direction, worm in mouth, I watched closely. The bird hopped all around the bush, eying me sharply, and at last jumped upon the lowest branch, gave me one last glance, slipped to the ground on the other side, and returned in a moment without the worm.

"Now," I said, exultingly — "now I have you!"

Carefully I crept up and parted the branches, while the disturbed bird hopped from twig to twig, saying "Quit! quit!" I looked in,

confidently expecting to see the low nest I knew so well. No nest was there. Then I searched the neighboring shrubs, and even the grass around, but no sign of his home could I find, while the bird, who had watched and followed me, plainly chuckled in a way that said, "Humph! you missed it, didn't you?" and I firmly believe that the saucy fellow ate the worm himself, and went through all that pretense of mystery to mislead me and rebuke my prying curiosity.

The singing of the cat-bird is as characteristic as anything else about him. No song of his ever comes from the top of a tall tree, where the robin delights to pour out his inspiring notes, but out of the deepest shade of the thickest shrub his music salutes the ear. It is the most charming of songs, exquisite in quality, and of compass and variety. His common chirp as he goes about in the bushes is soft as raindrops plashing into a quiet lake, and his low chatter to his friends has the same liquid character. But he has harsher tones; he has a sharp "tut, tut," like the robin, and he has the cry from which he is named, which at a little distance somewhat resembles the "mew" of a melancholy cat, but closer sounds more like the cry of a young baby. Then, also, when his anger is roused, and he flies furiously almost in one's

face, he gives utterance to a harsh, grating sound that one finds it hard to believe can come out of his mouth, like "Crack-rack-rack." In fact, I do not know a bird possessing a greater variety of notes.

When a cat-bird stands up three feet from you, not in the least flustered or disturbed, calmly looking you full in the face with both his bright black eyes, not turning his head from side to side in the way common to birds, you recognize in him something like intelligence and reason, and you cannot resist the conviction that he has his opinions, and could express them if only you could understand his language.

THE "TRICKS AND MANNERS" OF A CAT-BIRD.

"The birds around me hopped and played:
Their thoughts I cannot measure;—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure."

WORDSWORTH.

VI.

THE "TRICKS AND MANNERS" OF A CAT-BIRD.

For more than eight months a cat-bird has lived in my house, passing his days in freedom in the room where I sit at work, and his nights in a cage not six feet from my head.

Having spent a summer in watching his ways in his home, and acquiring a proper respect for his intelligence, I now wished to test him under new conditions, to see how he would adapt himself to our home, and I found the study one of the most absorbing interest.

He had been caged a few weeks only, but he was not at all wild, and he soon grew so accustomed to my silent presence that, unless I spoke, or looked at him, he paid no attention to me. By means of a small mirror and an opera-glass I was able to watch him closely in any part of the room, when he thought himself unobserved.

To the loving student of bird ways his feath-

ered friends differ in disposition as do his human ones. My cat-bird is a decided character, with more intelligence than any other bird I have observed. The first trait I noticed, and perhaps the strongest, was curiosity. It was extremely interesting to see him make acquaintance with my room, the first he had ever been free to investigate.

Usually, with birds long caged, it is at first hard to induce them to come out. I have been obliged actually to starve them to it, placing food and water outside, and repeating it for many days, before they would come out freely, and not be frightened. Not so with the cat-bird. The moment he found that a certain perch I had just put into his cage led into the room through the open door, he ran out upon it, and stood at the end, surveying his new territory.

Up and down, and on every side, he looked, excited, as the quick jerks of his expressive tail said plainly, but not in the least alarmed. Then he took wing, flew around and around several times, and at last, as all birds do, came full speed against the window, and fell to the floor. There he stood, panting. I spoke to him, but did not startle him by a movement, and in a few minutes he recovered his breath, and flew again, several times, around the room.

As soon as he became accustomed to using his wings, and learned, as he did at about the second attempt, that there was a solid reason why he could not fly to the trees he could see so plainly outside the window, he proceeded to study the peculiarities of the new world he found himself in. He ran and hopped all over the floor, into every corner; tried in vain to dig into it, and to pick up the small stripes on it. (The floor was covered with matting.) That being thoroughly explored, — the lines of junction of the breadths and the heads of the tacks, the dark mysteries of far under the bed and the queer retreat behind the desk, — he turned his attention to the ceiling. Around and around he flew slowly, hovering just under it, and touching it every moment with his bill, till that was fully understood to be far other than the blue sky, and not penetrable. Once having made up his mind about anything, it was never noticed again.

The windows next came under observation, and these proved to be a long problem. He would walk back and forth on the top of the lower sash, touching the glass constantly with his bill, or stand and gaze at the pigeons and sparrows and other objects outside; taking the liveliest interest in their doings, and now and then gently tapping, as if he *could* not under-

stand why it was impossible to join them. If it had not been winter, his evident longing would have opened windows for him; a pining captive being too painful to afford any pleasure.

But he soon became entirely contented, and, having satisfied himself of the nature of glass, seldom looked out, unless something of unusual interest attracted his attention; a noisy dispute in the sparrow family, trouble among the children of the next yard, or a snow-storm, which latter astonished and disturbed him greatly, at first.

The furniture then underwent examination. Every chair round, every shelf, every table and book, every part of the bed, except the white spread, of which he always stood in awe, was closely studied, and its practicability for perching purposes decided upon. My desk is an ever fresh source of interest, since its contents and arrangements vary. The top of a row of books across the back is his regular promenade, and is carpeted for his use with a long strip of paper. There he comes the first thing in the morning, and peers over the desk to see if I have anything for him, or if any new object has arrived. Here he gets his bit of apple or raisin; here meal-worms are sometimes to be had; and here he can stand on one foot and watch the movements of my pen, which he does

with great interest. Occasionally he finds an open drawer, into which he delights to go and continue his explorations among postage-stamps and bits of rubber, pencils and other small things, which he throws out on the floor, with always the possibility of discovering what is still an enigma to him, a rubber band, to carry off for his own use, as I will explain further on.

The walls and the furniture understood, he proceeded with his studies to the objects on the table. A mechanical toy interested him greatly. It moved easily, and the wind of his wings, alighting near it the first time, joggled it a little. He turned instantly, amazed to see signs of life where he did not expect them. For a moment he stood crouched, ready for flight if the thing should make hostile demonstrations. Seeing it remain still, he touched it gently with his bill. The toy moved, and he sprang back. In a moment it was still, and he tried again; and he did not leave it till he had fully exhausted its possibilities in the way of motion.

It is amusing to see how he is startled when anything moves. First he is in a panic, and then he coolly studies it out. On a table in the room stood a "Tweed Savings Bank" belonging to one of the children. This is the figure of a large, sleek-looking man seated in an arm-chair, and holding out one hand, which

bends when a penny is placed in it, and drops the coin into the vest pocket, the head making a bow of thanks. The cat-bird had great excitement over this object. He approached it in his wary manner, ready to fly instantly if it moved. Apparently he did not admire the stretched-out hand, and after studying it a moment he gave it a savage peck. It yielded, and he flew away. But he was not satisfied, and in a few moments returned. This time he tried the open pocket, probing it with his bill, and becoming at last so excited that he delivered a furious blow on the hand, which the figure politely acknowledged with a bow. The bird disappeared instantly, and gave the strange moving thing a full half hour's study from the cornice before he returned to the table. When he finally left it, however, he was perfectly satisfied that it was not alive, for he never touched or looked at it again.

At another time he saw his bath-tub, a tin dish, standing upon a pitcher. He alighted on the edge. It was so poised that it shook and rattled. The bird flew in a panic to the top of a cornice, his usual place of refuge, and closely watched the pan while it jarred back and forth several times. Apparently seeing that it was a harmless motion, he again flew down to the same spot; and the rattle and shake did not

drive him away till he had seen if there was still a drop of water left for him in the bottom of the dish.

One day, in his travels about the floor, he found a marble. It was too large to take up in his mouth, so he tried to stab it, as he does a grape. The first peck he gave sent it rolling off, and he hastily retreated to the cornice. When it stopped he returned and tried it again. This time it sprang toward him. He gave one great leap, and then, ashamed of his fright, stood and waited for it to be still. Again and again he tried to pierce the marble, till he was satisfied that it was not practicable, when he abandoned it forever.

The pins on my cushion are always objects of deepest interest to the cat-bird. He first tries to pull them out, and then to push them in. A large, black-headed shawl pin nearly drives him wild. He seizes it in his bill, but finds it a little too big and too slippery to carry off as he does the shoe-buttons it so greatly resembles. Then he tries to force it in; he pounces upon it, but his bill slips off; he gets so frantic that he fairly jumps off his feet to give greater force to the blow; still it does not move. After some time he departs in disgust, but he is not satisfied, for every time he visits the bureau, where he is fond of going, he has another struggle with that pin.

There is one mystery in the room not yet penetrated, though it is a subject of the deepest longing: it is my waste-basket, the contents of which are varied and attractive. He will stand on the edge, hop all around, and view it from every side; but it is so deep and narrow that he evidently does not dare to venture farther. Every day he goes to the edge, and gazes sadly and earnestly, but is never satisfied.

One of the most amusing of the cat-bird's performances was with a praying mantis, which lived for a few days under a small glass shade on my desk. The moment the bird caught sight of the stranger — about five minutes after its arrival — he was greatly interested, and instantly flew down to investigate. He alighted close to the glass, and at once gave it a tap, probably expecting to seize the insect. He was somewhat surprised to meet with resistance, but the effect upon the mantis was extraordinary. That strange little creature had from the first appeared observing: it would turn its head to look at a person who drew near, and return stare for stare, but it had never shown fear. But the cat-bird was different; he was recognized as an enemy. The instant he touched the glass the mantis sprang up on the defensive. Her plan seemed to be to make herself as terrible to him as possible, and her

efforts were remarkable. She raised her body as high as possible on four of her legs, while the other two, the fore-legs, or arms, were thrown out wide, as though to embrace him, as, by the way, she would have done, if it had reached a battle. She then raised her two pairs of wings in a most peculiar way, one above the other, all four in a row. The rear end of the body was curled up like a bow, and her whole frame swayed back and forth in a furious rage. It was a most curious and wonderful exhibition of passion in a creature not three inches long.

The cat-bird observed all this display with interest as great as our own. He studied her from every side, and tried again and again to penetrate the glass. Every way he turned she was ready for him, facing him always and perfectly prepared to grapple with him; and strange as it sounds, I am not sure of the result of the battle had no glass intervened. She would have sprung at his throat, no doubt, and held on with those terrible sharp-spined arms, till, unable to rid himself of them, he would have been choked.

Happily no such tragedy occurred, and the next tenant of the glass shade was, if possible, more interesting still to the bird. This was an enormous green grasshopper which passed the time in crawling up the sides of his prison, and

falling over on his back. The moment he arrived the cat-bird came down to look on. He watched with great attentiveness the slow and careful movements of the insect as it climbed the glass, bracing itself as long as possible with one of its long hind-legs resting on the floor. So long as the leg remained as a brace it was safe, but when the climber had to withdraw the support to go higher, its movements were not so sure, and suddenly it fell over backwards, landing on its back with all six legs wildly pawing the air. The human observers were startled, but the effect on the bird was laughable. He made one bound, landing a foot away; but unable to conquer his curiosity, slowly and warily returned, to be again startled by a second catastrophe. This performance was enacted again and again so long as the stupid green insect remained on the desk, but the bird never lost his interest in it, and never failed to be as much startled at the *dénouement* as at first. His interest in my doings is always intense, and at every fresh movement he will come down to the corner nearest me, if in his cage, or alight on the back of my desk, if out, and peer at me with closest attention. One thing that seems to amaze and confound him is my appearance in a different dress. "What sort of a monster is this," his manner says, "which

can change its feathers so rapidly and so often?"

If I want him to go into his cage, or to any part of the room, I need only to go myself and put some little thing there, or even appear to do so; and as soon as I retire he will rush over to see what I have done.

Next to his curiosity is his love of teasing. The subject furnishing opportunity for a display of this quality is a cardinal grosbeak, which cannot be coaxed to leave his cage. The latter is the older resident, and he did not receive the cat-bird very cordially. In fact, he grew cross from the day the latter arrived, and snarled and scolded every time he came near. The cat-bird soon found out that his enemy never left the cage, and since then has considered him a fit subject for annoyance. He will alight on the cardinal's cage, driving him nearly frantic; he will stand on a shelf near the cage, look in, and try to get at the food dish, — all of which is in the highest degree offensive, and calls forth violent scolds and screams of rage. Finally, he will steal a grape or bit of fruit stuck between the wires, when the cardinal will fairly blaze with wrath. At one time the cat-bird indulged in promenades across the top of the cage, until the exasperated resident resorted to severe measures, and by nipping his toes

succeeded in convincing his tormentor that the top of his house was not a public highway.

Worse than all his other misdeeds, however, was a deliberate insult he paid to the cardinal's singing. This ardent musician was one day sitting down on his perch, as he is fond of doing, and singing away for dear life, when the cat-bird alighted on the window-sash, close by the cage. The singer kept his eye on him, but proceeded with the music till the end of the strain, when, as usual, he paused. At that instant the cat-bird gave his tail one upward jerk, as if to say, "Humph!" I noticed the insulting air, but I was surprised to see that the cardinal appreciated it, also. He began again at once, in much louder tone, rising to his feet, — which he rarely does, — lifting his crest, swaying back and forth in a perfect rage, glaring at his enemy, and pouring out his usual song in such a flood of shrieks and calls that even the calm cat-bird was disturbed, and discreetly retired to the opposite window. Then the cardinal seated himself again, and stopped his song, but gave vent to his indignation in a most energetic series of sharp "tsips" for a long time.

Quite different is the cat-bird's treatment of two English goldfinches. On them he plays jokes, and his mischievous delight and his

chuckling at their success are plain to see. One of them — Chip, by name — knows that when he is in his cage, with the door shut, he is safe, and nothing the cat-bird can do disturbs him in the least; but the other — Chipee — is just as flustered and panic-stricken in her cage as out, and the greatest pleasure of his life is to keep her wrought up to the fluttering point. He has a perfect perception of the difference between the two birds. When both are out he will chase them around the room, from cornice to cornice; drive them away from the bath, which they all have on a table, purely for fun, as his manner shows. But once caged, he pays no further attention to Chip, while always inventing new ways to worry Chipee. He alights on the perch between the cages, crouches down, with eyes fixed upon her and tail jerking, as if about to annihilate her. She flies in wild panic against the wires, to his great gratification. Then he ruffs himself up to look terrible, spreads his legs wide apart, blusters, and jerks his body and wings and tail, making feints to rush at her, till she is so frightened that I take pity on her and drive him away.

One day, when she was more nervous and he more impish than usual, I covered her cage with a towel. He came back as soon as I had left it, and proceeded to inquire into this new

screen. After looking at it sharply on all sides, he went around behind the cage, pulled at the end of the towel, and peeped in. She fluttered, and he was pleased. I arranged it more securely, and the next performance was to take hold with his bill, and shake it violently. This also remedied, his last resource was to come down on the end of the perch with a bounce, making much more noise than usual; he generally alights like a feather. After each bounce he would stand and listen, and the flutter he always heard delighted him hugely. As long as they lived in the same room, she never conquered her fear, and he never tired of playing pranks around her.

If to learn by experience is a sign of reason in an animal, the cat-bird plainly demonstrated his possession of that quality. He learned readily by experience. Once or twice alighting on the cane seat of a chair, and catching his claws, taught him that was not a place for him, and he did it no more. When his claws grew so long as to curve around an ordinary perch, or a book, after being caught once or twice, he managed to accommodate himself to this new condition, and start in a different way. Instead of *diving* off a perch, as he naturally does, he gave a little jump up. The change was very marked, and he caught his claws no more.

He learned to ask to be uncovered in the morning, in about three days. He would begin his uneasiness quite early, flying back and forth violently in the cage, and at last he would call. I wanted to see if he would learn, so the moment he called I got up and removed the cover which protected him from cold at night. For two or three mornings he did the same, became uneasy, flew a while, and then called, when I at once responded. From the third day he called the instant he wanted to be uncovered, showing no more restlessness, and calling again and again if I did not move at once, at last giving his most harsh cry, and impatiently scolding with rage.

To beg for worms was an easy lesson. Having two or three times received them from a pair of tweezers on my desk, he came regularly; perched on the books; looked at me, and at the cup which had held the worms; then, if I did not get them, opened and closed his bill, and jerked his tail impatiently.

His great delight is to secure a rubber band, of which I keep two sizes, one hardly larger than a thread, and the other an eighth of an inch wide and two inches long doubled. These he is wild to get; and since he treats them as he does worms, I conclude that their softness and elasticity are deceptive, and a mys-

tery, like the glass, which he cannot solve. At any rate, after beating them on the floor as he does a worm, he always swallows them. He will persist in swallowing even the large ones, and sit puffed out on his perch in evident suffering for hours, before he discovers that he cannot digest it, and at last disgorges. To find a rubber band is the desire of his heart, and to keep him from one is the desire of mine. At first, when he pounced upon one, he would stand on my desk and swallow it; but after I tried to prevent this, he learned cunning. The instant his eye would spy one, generally under some paper in my drawer, he would first glance at me, then snatch the treasure, and instantly fly to the cornice, where I cannot reach him. I always know by the manner of his departure that he has found what he knows, perfectly well, is a forbidden object.

Another thing interesting to observe in the cat-bird is his way of hiding himself, when in plain sight all the time. He simply remains entirely motionless, and one may look directly at him, and not see him, so well does his plain dark dress harmonize with his usual surroundings. Often I come into the room and look about for him in all his favorite places, — on the cornice, the desk, and before the glass; no bird to be seen. As I move about to look more

closely, he will suddenly fly up almost from under my hand. Still as he can keep, his movements are rapid; he is deliberation itself in making up his mind to go anywhere, but once decided he goes like a flash.

When a new bird was introduced into the room, an English song thrush, twice as big as himself, the cat-bird was at first uncertain how to treat him; but in one day he learned that he could frighten him. The small, dark, impish-looking fellow, rushing madly at the big, honest, simple thrush, put him into an uncontrollable panic. As soon as this fact was established the cat-bird became a tyrant. He will not allow him to enjoy anything on the floor, drives him away from the bath, mocks his singing with harsh notes, and assumes very saucy airs towards him.

The worst effect of the thrush's coming, however, was to show me a new trait of the cat-bird's character, — jealousy. The first day or two he sulked, would not go out of his cage, would not touch meat, and though he has gradually returned to his liberty and his meat, he still refuses, now after two months, to alight on my hands for his tid-bits as he did before.

Nothing is more interesting than to note the variety the cat-bird will give to the cry which at a distance resembles the "mew" of a cat.

He has many other notes and calls, besides his exquisite songs, but there is hardly a shade of emotion that he cannot express by the inflection he gives to that one cry. Whether he proclaims a melancholy mood by softly breathing it from closed bill, or jerks it out with a snap at the end, as though he bit it off, when he is deprived of some cherished treasure, — as, for instance, a rubber band, — from one extreme to the other, with all the shades between, each expresses a meaning, and each is intelligible to a loving and observing student of his ways.

THE BIRD OF SOCIETY.

"'T is a woodland enchanted!
By no sadder spirit
Than blackbirds and thrushes,
That whistle to cheer it
All day in the bushes,
This woodland is haunted:
And in a small clearing,
Beyond sight or hearing
Of human annoyance,
The little fount gushes."

LOWELL.

"The blackbirds make the maples ring
With social cheer and jubilee;
The redwing flutes his *o-ka-lee*."

EMERSON.

VII.

THE BIRD OF SOCIETY.

THE redwing blackbird is preëminently a bird of social tastes. Nearly the whole year he lives in a noisy crowd, calling, screaming, and singing from morning till night. At this time in his life his manners are of no particular interest, but in the spring, as to other birds, comes the mysterious impulse to leave the giddy throng, to retire to a quiet nook, to build a nest and establish a family. During this pleasing episode in his ordinary history, his personality reveals itself. He is no longer simply a unit in a lively mob, but an individual with well-marked characteristics and tastes of his own, and he then becomes attractive to the student of bird ways. It is in his domestic capacity, at the head of a family, that the redwing is now presented to you.

The blackbird nook is invariably the loveliest spot in a neighborhood, and is never hard to find, for with childlike ingenuousness he

makes himself so conspicuous, and his business so apparent, that the dullest observer cannot fail to notice him. Long before you reach his vicinity you shall hear his gleeful "Conk-a-ree" (or more correctly "h'wa-ker-ēē," as Gentry has it), and, as you approach, his loud "Chack! chack!" challenging your right to intrude, and demanding your business in his retreat.

But draw near, even if, as sometimes happens, the bird grows belligerent and swoops down toward your face. You will find a clump of trees at the edge of the water, generally hedged in by low, thick-growing shrubs. Part the branches, in defiance of his angry protests, stoop, and you shall step into a most charming spot, his chosen home. If in a park it will be a bit of wildness, left as nature planned it, unfrequented and perfectly secluded, though perhaps not ten feet from a common walk.

Within the thick shrouding bushes the ground is bare or thinly clad with low shrubs, and tall trees completely shade the leafy temple, which is cool and roomy and refreshing in its peculiar green light. One side borders the water, and there, low among the reeds, is doubtless the homestead so highly regarded, and so poorly concealed. But though the spot be lonely, you shall not enjoy it in peace, for this anxious parent, the most fussy and restless of feathered

folk, will not cease to scold and scream so long as you stay, running along the branches, and eying you from every side.

Should his mate be sitting she will keep silent, and show herself more wary than her spouse, but if the young are out she will soon appear. She differs so greatly from her consort that you may not recognize her till she adds her volubility to the *mêlée* and you perceive that her voice is exactly like his. She is smaller, and an inconspicuous gray and brown in color, which better fits her for her maternal duties, but her manner of carrying herself, her restlessness, and the expressive use of the tail are like his. He is the most conspicuous feature in the landscape; shining black from the point of the bill to the tip of the toes, his color harmonizes with nothing in nature, and his gold-fringed, scarlet epaulets gleam through the trees like gems.

Sit down quietly and watch the bird. Notwithstanding his "society" life he has not the slightest repose of manner. He is incessantly in motion; to stand still and be looked at is impossible to a blackbird. He will walk along a small branch in such a way that it requires a close look to see that he does not put one foot before the other. He really "sidles," but holds his body in the direction he is moving, so that

one is easily deceived. Then he will jump heavily to the next bough, and walk the length of that, jerking his tail at every step, and all the time scolding and screaming at the top of his voice, till you are sure the whole bird world will be notified of the presence of an inquisitive stranger with suspicious manners.

Should the young be out, you will quickly be informed of the fact by the presence of the modestly dressed mother, who will appear, perhaps, with a mouthful of food, which, however, will not prevent her uttering the blackbird "Chack! chack!" She will resent your intrusion earnestly, hopping uneasily about the tree, anxious to carry her load to the nest, yet fearing to have you see her, till at length she will slip behind the trunk and silently take wing from the further side, while her ingenuous spouse, perfectly confident of the success of her ruse, delivers a triumphant cry.

Such childlike faith is not to be betrayed. You have not the heart to follow that troubled mother to the clump of low bushes where her treasure is hidden. You are not here as a robber, or a violator of homes, however small, but as a student of life. To-morrow you shall return and see the darlings of the blackbird family out on the tree, which is much more satisfactory than to disturb the nest, and distress the owners thereof.

If you keep still so long that the lively bird forgets your presence and becomes less noisy, you may see him sit down on a branch to rest after his excitement, letting his tail hang straight down; and now and then, stretching out his long neck till the feathers stand apart, swell out his throat and treat you to his song. If the hour is favorable you may see him bathe, and it is worth seeing, for he is exceedingly fond of water. He spatters and splashes with a good will, and although too careless a fellow to be much of a dandy in his subsequent toilet, — simply shaking himself violently, and leaving the sunshine to complete the drying, — yet his coat is bright and shining.

When the young blackbird family appears on the tree, the spectacle is most amusing. The father, fussy as the celebrated "hen with one chicken," hopping and running over the branches, chattering all the time, and now and then offering a dainty morsel to one of the infants; the mother busy enough trying to fill the ever yawning mouths; and the clumsy youngsters themselves, as big as their mother and exactly like her in color, too restless to keep near each other, but sidling along the branches and hopping awkwardly about the tree, so that the mother has to seek them in a new place every time she returns from her excursions for food.

For several days the feeding goes on, till the youngsters' tails have fully grown out, and one cannot tell them from the mother, and then some morning the student creeps into the blackbird nook, and finds it strangely quiet, and the whole family gone. It is probably quite broken up, the father has resumed his bachelor ways in the society of his kind, and the full grown young of the neighborhood are enjoying life in their own fashion in a flock by themselves.

The summer home life of the blackbird is over, and you will seek him in vain in the nook. Henceforth it is the open country and the cornfields where he is to be found, under many names, but uneasy and voluble as ever, and here we will not follow him.

The noises a blackbird will make are of great variety, more than one would suspect who has not studied him in confinement. His close acquaintance with all the sounds a bird will make and the emotions indicated by the different cries and calls is perhaps the most useful knowledge to be gained by keeping him in captivity. The blackbird in the house has made every slightest sound familiar, and you never mistake him for any other, however far-off or well-concealed.

The song of this bird has been variously characterized, but rarely appreciated. It is, in

truth, when heard away from the crowd a wild, rich strain, bringing memories of the woods in long summer days, the delightful odor of fresh earth and strong vegetable growth. It is impossible to describe, but no bird's song is more expressive of his life, or more suggestive of wild nature. It consists of two strains, each of which is varied. That most commonly heard has been well represented — as I said — by the syllables "h' wa-ker-ēē," on an ascending scale. Heard nearer, however, this strain is found to consist *always* of four notes (one lower in the beginning), and often of six. If the usually heard notes are supposed "do-mi-sol-do," beginning on low C, (which they nearly resemble) the bird varies it by sometimes singing "sol-mi-do-mi-sol-do," in the same octave, and occasionally by throwing in a note between each of the original four. The whole has an indescribable quality, and the final "do" is often a well-executed trill. The second strain is of similar notes, only in a minor key. If the tones cannot be said to be sweet in themselves, it must be remembered that they are intended for distant effects, and at least they are clear, perfectly suited to the woods, and not unpleasing even in a room.

But his song is the smallest of the blackbird's utterances. To begin with, is his familiar harsh

"chack," expressing various emotions, being sometimes softened into "check," and "chick," and even with closed bill into a rich "chuck." Besides this he has a shrill scream — it can be called nothing else — on a high key, a sharp, insect-like sound, and a rough aspirate, when displeased, like the first sound of "h." Aside from all these, however, this bird possesses one genuinely sweet, most musical note. It is a single call which sounds like "ēē-ū ū." He gives it sometimes when flying, and in captivity when enjoying anything exceedingly. For instance, in bathing he will utter that note, and if one answers in a moderately close imitation on the same key, he will repeat it. I have kept one saying it over for twenty times or more.

Poets and naturalists have exhausted adjectives in ridiculing the blackbird's song, but the reasons for the peculiar discordance of a flock are not far to seek. In the first place, when birds begin to moult, and their usually clear, decided notes break, crack, and fail miserably, nearly every one takes refuge in silence. If he cannot sing his best, he will not sing at all. The blackbird is the only exception I know, and he is so brimming over with spirits and jollity that sing he must. He is not discouraged, although his attempted "h' wa-ker-ēē!" ends

in the first syllable in a crack, or choke, or even in a dismal squeal, as it sometimes does. He simply pauses a moment as if to collect his energies, and then utters his whole song, every note clearly and well, as if to say, "That was only a slip; you see I can sing yet." It is extremely interesting to hear the gentle, low trials which he will give of his returning powers when the moulting season is over; whispered songs, as it were, till he is sure he has recovered his voice, and can utter the full, clear song in which he delights.

Then, again, his song needs for full enjoyment to be alone, while in the "madding crowd" of a flock of blackbirds, noisy and garrulous as a pack of school-children, the "h' waker-ēē" of one is spoiled by the scream of another and the "chack, chack's" of twenty more. Listen to one bird alone in his own chosen nook, and no song in the woods seems more appropriate, more to breathe the very soul of wildness.

When this bird expresses his emotions in a house the strain is most characteristic, being a curious medley of all the sounds he can make in rapid succession, as "h' wa-ker-ēē! chack, chack! (scream) ēē-ūū! chack, chack! (scream) chick, chick! ēē-ū ū! h' wa-ker-ēē! (scream)" and so on for fifteen minutes or more without

pause. His morning song is the "h' wa-ker-ēē" alone at intervals of a minute or less. In happy captivity he will sing thus for an hour, while yet the room is dark, and before he touches food.

I spoke of the blackbird's fondness for water. In a cage it is impossible to keep more than a quarter of an inch of water in his dish. This element is simply irresistible. The first thing he does is to spatter as much out as he can, and then with every mouthful of food, before and after and in the middle of his eating, he wants water. Seeds he cracks over the dish and gathers the fragments as they float; of mocking-bird food he takes a beakful and deliberately drops it in the water and eats the particles daintily from the top.

He is the only bird I have seen pay particular attention to bathing his feet, but my blackbird will stand on the edge of his bathing dish, fill his beak with water and pass it down over each toe in succession, letting the water flow over it, and apparently scraping the whole length carefully. I have watched this very closely while not three feet from him.

The same bird learned in a few days to know his regular attendant, and while remaining for months quite wild on the approach of the gentleman of the family, whom he saw every day,

was never in the least wild with me. From the first he took food from my hand, and before he had been in the house a week, seeing one day a thrush standing on my knee and receiving meat from my hand, he came out of his cage, flew across the room and alighted beside the thrush (who instantly vacated his position) and stood there as long as I fed him, showing not the least fear. A little later, when he became ill, and so weak that he hesitated to descend his three perches for food because of his uncertain footing, he allowed me to put my hand in the cage and hold his dish up to him on the upper perch, when he would eat freely, and then, when I offered the water, drink also. For two or three days he ate in no other way, and I am confident I thus kept him alive while curing him of his ailment.

This bird has now lived with me many months, and though his cage door is always open he seldom comes out, and when he does is very glad to get back. He is observing, notices in a moment if I have anything to eat, and comes instantly to the side near to me and calls, till I offer him a bit of whatever it may be, when he descends to his beloved water-cup, tastes the morsel and usually deposits it tidily in one of his dishes. He had a strange experience a few months ago; he broke off the end

of his bill. First the upper mandible appeared a quarter of an inch shorter than the lower, and he had great trouble to eat, though he sang as merrily as usual. In a day or two, while I was seeking advice on the subject, which by the way I did not get, for no one that I could find ever heard of such a case, he broke the lower one to match. Since then he is as happy as ever, disturbed by nothing except the singing of one of his neighbors, whom it seems to be the aim of his life to reduce to silence. If volume would do it success must crown his efforts, but his opponent is a plucky little fellow and refuses to be suppressed, and so for months the unequal rivalry has continued.

The redwing is never by any chance graceful. He walks about the floor like an old man with the gout, and he has a curious fashion of thrusting his long bill into a dish and then opening it, as if to pry the seed or water apart. He does the same under the edge of a towel or newspaper on the floor.

One funny little exhibition of intelligence was furnished by the blackbird and a thrush. The latter chose to alight beside the former's cage, and attempt to pull things through the wires. The indignant owner came down to the corner nearest the intruder and began to scold "Chack!

(scream) chack! (scream)." The thrush went calmly on with his occupation, seeing which the blackbird slightly raised the wing nearest the enemy and quivered it with excitement, while repeating the salutation above. Finding the thrush not in the least disturbed by this demonstration he resorted to more severe measures, and gave a violent peck between the wires (touching nothing, however). This settled the matter, but the queer thing about it was the fact that both birds would pause in their hostilities every few seconds and look over to where I sat. I feigned not to see them, and then they resumed their demonstrations, acting exactly like two quarrelsome children who look to see if they are observed. It showed an intelligent acknowledgment of my position as law-maker, and a recognition of the possibility of my being displeased, besides a guilty consciousness of wrong doing.

The blackbird's use of his wings is exceedingly expressive. On one occasion, wishing to carry him to another house, I placed him in the basket I keep for the purpose, comfortably fitted with perch and food dishes. In this conveyance he remained an hour, and when I took him out he was in a new cage in a room he had never seen. He noticed the strangeness of his surroundings, examined every part of the

cage with interest and at last came and stood on the side nearest me. I began to talk to him, when he at once showed the deepest attention, held both wings slightly away from his body, and quivering, while head and body swayed from side to side, and his eyes were fixed on mine. "Why have you done this thing?" his manner said. "Why have you torn me from my familiar home, confined me in a basket, and placed me among strangers at last?"

So evident was his emotion, and so eloquent his expression of it, that I am not ashamed to admit that I was greatly touched.

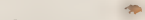
"UPON THE TREE-TOP."

"Hush! 'T is he?
My oriole, my glance of summer fire,
Is come at last, and, ever on the watch,
Twitches the pack-thread I had lightly wound
About the bough to help his housekeeping, —
Twitches and scouts by turns, blessing his luck,
Yet fearing one who laid it in his way,
Nor, more than wiser we in our affairs,
Divines the providence that hides and helps."

LOWELL.

VIII.

"UPON THE TREE-TOP."



When I stepped into the yard of the cottage that was to be my home for a month, the first bird I saw was a Baltimore oriole, perched on a dead branch near the top of a tall old apple-tree. His rich colors shone brightly against the foliage behind him, and he was evidently at home, for he had the air of a proprietor. I was pleased; but the sentiment was not mutual. He greeted me with scolding, and as that did not drive me away he became restless, hopped from branch to branch, flirting his tail and showing extreme uneasiness. Looking about for the reason of his uncalled-for hostilities, I saw the nest, on a slender branch of a young maple, ten or twelve feet high. He was on guard, and it was in his official capacity of special police that he had given me so inhospitable a reception. Nor could I wonder; it must have been disconcerting to him. Relying upon a cottage shut up and showing no signs of life, he

had set up housekeeping not a dozen feet from the kitchen door, and naturally, on so small a tree, in a most conspicuous position; when suddenly the silent old building had burst open at every window and door, and swarmed with human life. A mischievous boy or an inquisitive student of bird ways might cause untold trouble and alarm in that small household. Such, at least I fancied, were the reflections of the troubled soul in that agitated body as he looked down upon us, watching every movement, flitting from tree to tree, but never losing sight of any one who chanced to be in the orchard. During this uneasy period I saw what looked like a deliberate intention to deceive. In examining this new field I noticed a small nest in an upright fork of an old tree, in a dead branch at the top, doubtless a last year's home of some small bird. While I looked at it, the oriole flew from his perch directly to it, leaned over as if interested in its contents, and so intently that I could not resist the conviction that he wished to mislead me, for when I examined his nest, and he saw that all disguise was at an end, he never again, that I saw, went near that deserted residence.

This oriole was a remarkably silent bird, the first of his family that I have noticed who passed hour after hour without opening his

mouth to sing, and, I sometimes thought, to eat, so quietly did he sit on the branch overlooking his homestead. Happily, he soon learned that we were friends, and if, perhaps, somewhat prying as to his domestic concerns, still not intending harm. He grew more free in movement, ventured now and then to desert his post of watcher, and be absent a half-hour at a time; also he found his voice, and entertained us with calls, single notes of the rich flute-like quality for which his family is noted, and very rarely with his song.

It was the third day of June, and sitting was already begun. The tree on which his nest was placed had ten branches, not one over two feet long; the eighth was the largest, and on that hung the oriole nursery. It was pretty to see the birds approach it. When not alarmed, they invariably alighted on the lowest branch, near the stem of the tree, and hopped from step to step upward; in leaving they never retraced their steps, but mounted the two remaining branches, and took flight from the top twig. When the female reached home after a short absence, she hastened up the winding stairs, looked anxiously at her treasures, plunged in head-first, and then, quick as a jack-in-the-box, thrust her head above the edge for a last look, before she settled out of sight

within. Very seldom did both birds leave home at the same time. When she was obliged to go for food, for he never appeared to bring her anything, she uttered a call; he at once responded, and placed himself on his post of observation to watch; on returning she dropped another note or two, as if of thanks, and then he flew away. Once, in the early morning, before the house was open, I found them both off, so I concluded it was because of us that they were so vigilant during the day. A more constant and jealous watcher than this bird could scarcely be. When not in the apple boughs, he might generally be seen in a tree in the next lot, a little farther off, and it seemed as if he was not absent long enough to get necessary food.

One day an impatient visitor, wishing to see if the oriole was at home, gave the tree a violent shake. She was at home, and she flew off in a rage, perching on the next tree, scolding and shaking her wings at him, every moment emitting a peculiar cry, new to me then, but very familiar later, — the cry of distress. In a moment or two this brought upon the scene her mate, who added his cries and demonstrations to hers. The perpetrator of this rude joke retired, somewhat ashamed, and it was interesting to see how long it was after all was quiet before

the birds were reassured. He went to the nest and looked in, but she could not be persuaded that it was safe for her to return. She flew back and forth between two trees about a hundred feet apart. In the route she went past her home; after flying straight by once or twice, her course began to swerve a little towards her own tree; the second time she almost reached it, but turned and went on; the third time she alighted an instant on the lowest step, hastily flying away as if she expected another earthquake; the fourth time she rapidly mounted her winding stairs, and glanced in the nest; the fifth time she entered it for a moment; the sixth time she stayed.

One morning, after breakfast, an unusual sound was heard, the same by which the female oriole when in trouble had called her mate, — the signal of distress. It came from the front of the house, and I hastened to see what was amiss with the little family. Before I reached them I noticed the cawing of a crow nearer than we usually heard that sound, and when I came in sight of the woods on that side, behold! *Corvus* himself on the top branch of a tall tree, perfectly outlined against the sky, cawing his loudest. The oriole was not in sight, but while I looked a second crow rose from the woods, and after him, to my surprise,

the oriole. He pursued the same tactics that the kingbird does, flying above the enemy and pouncing upon the back of his head or neck. The crow flew over the orchard, accompanied all the way by his plucky little assailant, while the first crow remained on the perch and encouraged his comrade till both were out of sight, when he also took wing and followed. They were out of sight certainly, but not out of hearing, for the cry of the oriole and the caw of the crow came to us for half an hour, growing more and more distant, however, till I began to fear that unlucky oriole would be completely exhausted, or possibly dispatched — which would have been easy enough if the two crows had combined, for he was utterly reckless in his attack. Just as I was becoming anxious, for the sounds had ceased, I heard a joyous song of triumph, and there he was! — in the old spot, looking as fresh and gay as if he had not come from a battle-field. Upon his cry, the little spouse came out of the nest, and responded with a few notes, evidently praise of his bravery, for he fidgeted about in a self-conscious way, bowed his head, flirted his wings, and manifested great excitement for some time.

But though driven away, the crows were not conquered, and the next morning I was wakened by the voice of a crow so very near that

I sprang to the window. It was five o'clock, and of course perfectly light, and there sat the marauder in plain sight on an apple-tree in the orchard, a thing the wary bird never did after getting-up time. The oriole was there also, uttering his war cry; and hidden from them by the blinds I had a perfect opportunity to see his method of attack. I have never seen the kingbird annoy a crow except when flying: while the crow is at rest, the kingbird also remains quiet, at some little distance. Not so my brave oriole; he harassed that crow constantly, alighting not more than two feet from him, and at his own level, so that I was surprised the crow did not seize him, for I am sure he was easily within reach. The oriole called and bowed, turned this way and that, holding his wings a little out and fluttering them, and then he flew over and pecked at the crow as he went, alighting on the other side; then, in a moment, after more posturing and calling, returned in the same way. So he kept up the warfare, while the crow continued his cawing, being answered from the next lot, but made no attempt to put an end to the attacks. Fully five minutes he sat there, though it was manifestly not comfortable, for he lowered his head to avoid the beak of his tormentor, and once or twice turned and seemed to snap at him.

When at last he flew, his small foe was upon him. I thought it strange that of the twenty-five or thirty birds which frequented the place, among which were several known to fight the crow, not one came to help. If the robins and cat-birds and others whose territory he invaded had united, they could have driven him away at once, but perhaps mobbing is the exclusive prerogative of the English house sparrow.

The next encounter I saw was also early in the morning. First I noticed a crow silently fly over, and perch in the top of a pine-tree. It was a singular place, and most undesirable apparently, for it was in the middle of a clump of top branches of about the same height. The crow seemed to have trouble in adjusting himself among the hundreds of sharp needles that pointed upward, changing his position and settling himself with difficulty, but at length he seemed satisfied with his arrangements, and began his loud caw. In a moment the oriole was after him, and I now guessed the reason of his choice of seat. There were no surrounding twigs which his foe could use as a base for offensive operations, and moreover the bristling needles which surrounded him offered very good protection from the fiery little oriole, who found it impossible to pursue his usual tactics. I was amused to see the wary precautions of the crow,

and doubtless he thought he had outwitted the enemy. But he underrated the intelligence of the small bird, for although difficult to reach him, it was not at all impossible. He simply rose above the crow, pounced directly upon him, and instantly rose again, instead of glancing off one side as usual. It was distinctly different, but equally effective, and in a few moments the crow gave up the contest for the time, flying across the orchard, and making a deep swoop down to avoid the plunge of his assailant.

Unfortunately, like some personages of military fame, this bird did not know when he was beaten, and every day or two, through June, hostilities were renewed. On one occasion I was pleased to see a kingbird join the oriole and assist in worrying the common enemy in his passage over the house. Several times, before the little ones became too clamorous, the female oriole accompanied him.

This bird's song consisted of four notes, and it is curious that although there is a peculiar, rich, flute-like quality by which the oriole notes may be recognized, no two sing alike. Robins, song sparrows, and perhaps all other birds sing differently from each other, so far as I have observed, but none differ so greatly — in my opinion — as orioles. The four that I have been

able to study carefully enough to reduce their song to the musical scale, though all having the same compass, arranged the notes differently in every case. The oriole is, of course, not limited in expression to his song. I have spoken of his cry of distress or of war, which was two tones slurred together. The ordinary call, as he goes about a tree, especially a fruit-tree in bloom, seeking insects over and under each leaf or blossom, is a single note, loud and clear. If a pair are on the tree together, it is the same, but much softer.

An oriole that I watched in the Catskill Mountains regularly fed his mate while she was sitting, and as he left the nest after giving her a morsel, he uttered two notes which sounded exactly like "A-dieu," adding, after a pause, two more which irresistibly said, "Dear-y." There was a peculiar mournfulness in this bird's strain, as if he implied "It 's a sad world; a world of cats and crows and inquisitive people, and we may never meet again." Perhaps it was prophetic, for disaster did overtake the little family; a high wind rocked the cradle — which also was on a small maple-tree — so violently as to throw out the youngsters before they could fly. The accident was remedied as far as possible by returning them to the nest, but whether they were injured by the fall I never learned.

Scolding is quite ready to an oriole's tongue, and even squawks like a robin's are not unknown. The female has similar utterances, but in those I have listened to her song was weaker, lacked the clear-cut perfection of her mate's, and sounded like the first efforts of a young bird. In the case of those now under consideration, the female reproduced exactly her partner's notes, only in this inferior style, which seemed rather unusual. The sweetest sound the oriole utters is a very low one, to his mate when near her, or flying away with her, or to his nestlings before they leave the home. It is a tender, yearning call that makes one feel like an intruder, and as if he should beg pardon and retire. It is impossible to describe or reduce to the scale, but it is well worth waiting and listening for.

What I most desired to see, in watching the oriole's nest, was the introduction of the young into the world, the first steps, the first flight; and on the thirteenth day of the month came the first indication that they were out of the shell. The male bird went to the nest, leaned over, and looked in with great interest, while his mate stood unconcernedly on another twig near. The next day it became evident that her special duties were over, for she spent no more hours sitting, and her consort suddenly

undertook the housekeeping. She frequently perched on another tree, and dressed her feathers a half-hour at a time; and greatly she needed to, poor soul! for a more ragged, neglected-looking bird I never saw. The feathers were quite off the back of her head, giving her a curious outline, as though a bit of her neck had been chopped out, which peculiarity was of use later, since it enabled me to identify her half a mile from her home. Her manner to her mate at this time said plainly, "I've done my work, now it's your turn," and he gladly accepted the charge. He was obviously tired of idleness and waiting, and he devoted himself with his whole soul to his babies. Many times a day he ascended the winding stairs and stood on the landing leaning over, head down in the nursery and tail standing straight up in the air, making him look like a black stick from where I sat. For a day or two he took nearly the whole charge, then she began to help, and before many days both were engaged every moment, the hardest working pair imaginable, constantly seeking food and carrying it to the little ones, or putting the crowded house in order. He was as faithful and cheerful a drudge as the mother herself, for which he must have the more credit, since he nearly stood on his head in doing anything about the nest. It required,

indeed, the untiring efforts of both parents to keep pace with the growth of the family.

On the twenty-second day of the month, nine days after the sitting was abandoned and I knew the young orioles to be hatched (though of course they may have been out a day or two before), I heard them peep softly when food was brought, and I redoubled my watching to see them appear. On the twenty-seventh, when I went to the veranda at eight o'clock, I heard a new and strange cry in the next lot, a pasture with scattering trees, and I saw both orioles often fly that way. It sounded like birds in distress, and reminded me of cries I once heard from several wood thrushes when disturbed by a cat. I hastened upon the scene, and was met at the entrance by a bluebird in a great rage. I thought she was in trouble, but upon following the cries (in spite of her protests) I came upon a bird new to me. It somewhat resembled the female oriole, being almost her colors, with head and wings a little darker. This bird received me with scolding, and was very lively in running over the trees, though he did not seem inclined to fly. The calling was now very near, and while I never saw him in the act, I was confident he made at least a part of it; and I still think he did, although I afterwards found those whose natural cry it proved to be. I

think it was a last year's oriole, not yet come to his full plumage. Possibly he was attracted by the cry of the young, as we know birds sometimes are, and it seems not unlikely that he replied to them in their own tones. However that may be, I saw later the young birds — two of them — and found to my surprise that they were orioles and from our nest, for I saw the well-marked mother feed them. Moreover, orioles are not so clannish as robins, nor so often found near each other. I knew of another pair a quarter of a mile off, and once a strange female came upon a tree where our little mother was looking for food. She received the visitor — I regret to say — with a sharp "fuff!" more like a cat than a bird, on which the intruder very properly left.

The baby orioles were dumpy little yellowish things, much like a young chicken in color, and the most persistent cry-babies I ever saw among birds. The young robin generally sits on his branch motionless, seldom opens his mouth for a call, and makes demonstrations only when food is in sight; the baby thrush is patience and silence itself, — indeed how otherwise could be a thrush? Even the little blackbird, though restless and fussy, does not cry much; but those oriole infants simply bawled (there 's no other word) every instant. The cry was very pe-

culiar, four or five loud notes on an ascending scale, rapidly and constantly repeated, like "chr-r-r-r."

I should think the parents of these clamorous creatures would have been driven wild, and they did appear nearly so; almost every moment one or the other brought food to the two bawlers, who were on different trees twenty feet apart. Each one sat stock still, like a lost child afraid to stir, and gave his whole mind to the noise he was making, and I wondered how they had raised courage to fly so far from home. I felt greatly chagrined that they had flown without my seeing them, but on returning to my usual seat was consoled to find the nest not yet empty. The father gave his almost undivided attention to the two already out, but the mother was very busy at the homestead, and I resolved that no more should fly without my assisting at the operation, at least by my presence; consequently I nearly lived upon the veranda. All through the next day, until nearly eight o'clock, those youngsters could be heard crying, and on the third day the sounds came from further off, and the male oriole was rarely seen.

The twenty-fifth passed, and no birds left the nest; the next day there was a stir in the maple. Early in the morning a nestling scrambled

up on the edge of his cradle and peeped out upon the big world, while both parents hovered about in great excitement. He found it uncongenial, perhaps, for, although a brother oriole clambered up beside him and stood shivering on the brink, he hesitated, turned toward the warm nest and plunged in head-first, dragging the other with him in his fall. Perhaps it was *because* the second came up, for I noticed afterwards that two were never out at the same time; not until one had flown did the next come up, and then he followed at once. Upon the sudden disappearance, both parents retreated to the apple-tree, and one announced the failure of their hopes to the other with a scolding note, — "gone back," it said. But his hour had come, and before long that young bird made another trial: first his fluffy little head appeared; a struggle, a scramble, and he was safely upon a twig outside. No sooner did he find himself in the air than he began the "chr-r-r-r" of the brothers who had preceded him by two days. The mother came, but she did not feed him, though he was very eager. She alighted upon a twig below him, and he fluttered towards her, when suddenly she flew. Then she returned, passed him, and attended to the one in the nest, and he was disappointed again. For two hours, during which he seldom

received a morsel, while both parents coaxed him from the next tree, he stretched his wings, shook them out, plumed himself, and gradually grew accustomed to being out. They called; they flew about, around him, as if to show how easy it was; they uttered the low yearning cry spoken of; and above all, they nearly starved him. "Come here, and you shall eat," their manner said; and at last the youngling fluttered away, in a wavering, uncertain manner. He reached the nearest tree, caught at a twig, missed it, clutched awkwardly, beat the air, and finally managed to secure a hold. Then he at once righted himself, shook himself out, — and began to cry! He was abundantly fed and coddled by the delighted parents, and soon began to hop around on the tree quite proudly.

Meanwhile number four had scrambled up to the twig from which flew every young oriole that I saw. Even in the cradle, or at least on its edge, these birds displayed character. This one was quite different from his predecessor: he looked about him; he did not cry so much; and when, after an hour's preparation, he flew, he soared off in a strong flight, aiming for a tree more than twice as far from home as that his brother had selected for his first attempt. He was a bold, self-reliant, heroic spirit, doubtless his father's own son, who would fight

crows to the end of his days. But, alas, he had miscalculated his strength, and before reaching his goal he came fluttering to the ground. The parents were at hand, but instantly became silent, apparently not knowing how to help him, for this was a serious calamity. It was in an open lane that he had come down, and at any moment a passing boy or dog might discover him; so, although I should have liked to see if they could do anything for him, I did not dare risk it. I hurried down, and found him running about in the hot grass, wild-eyed and panting, but silent. The moment I came near both parents found their voices and began scolding; but after a good look at him I drew down a low branch, and put him upon it, when the orioles became quiet, and I left them. He was yellowish-drab on the breast and ash-colored on the wings, with distinct oriole markings, short wings, and no tail; smaller in proportion to the parents than a young robin, I think.

Quiet descended once more upon the "cradle in the tree-top," though I saw, to my surprise, that it still was not empty; four birds of that size I should think enough, and more than enough, to fill it. The father assumed the care of the two just out, and the mother alone remained about the home. The next day passed

without departures; but on the morning of the twenty-eighth, number five came up to the edge. This bird had begun his loud calls before he appeared — the day before, in fact; and when he finally reached the outside world, he flew very soon, about eight o'clock in the morning. He, too, started for the distant tree that had attracted number four, and the anxious mother, remembering, no doubt, the late accident, flew close by him, cheering and encouraging all the time as she went. It was beautiful to see her, sometimes over, sometimes under him, but never a foot away, and constantly calling most sweetly. He reached the tree in safety.

Now came in sight number six — as it proved, the last of the family. Unfortunately it was not a fair morning, and soon it began to rain. He crowded nearer to the tree stem and sat in silence. It was a cool reception from the world; I feared it would be too much for him. The mother came anxiously, and now I saw him fed. The parent had, so far as I could see, nothing in her mouth, but she put her beak to his, then drew it away, and returned it again, four or five times in succession, to his evident satisfaction. Most of the time the youngster was alone on the tree, facing the wet, wet world by himself, — occasionally calling a little. It was so discouraging that I kept con-

stant watch, hoping he would wait for better weather, and fearing his wet wings would not carry him even to the next tree.

At about two o'clock it cleared, and after much preening and dressing of feathers, number six flew successfully, reaching a still different tree. No two of them alighted on the same tree, and no two acted, or looked, or flew alike. Also, I noticed the six had left the nest in pairs, with forty-eight hours between each pair.

All the next day I heard baby cries in the adjoining lot, as well as in the woods beyond; but on the third day no sounds were to be heard, no birds were seen, and the nest in the maple was as completely deserted as if no orioles had ever lived in the orchard. When the little ones can fly, the birds are at home anywhere; any twig is a perch, any field or wood a gleaning ground, and any branch a bed.

TRANSIENT GUESTS IN THE BIRD-ROOM.

"And all the throng
That dwell in nests and have the gift of song;
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught;
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even
Are half-way houses on the road to heaven."

LONGFELLOW.

IX.

TRANSIENT GUESTS IN THE BIRD-ROOM.

During all the years of bird-study in the house, there has been an almost constant succession of transients in the bird-room. These were birds — or beasts — intended for close acquaintance, but, proving themselves in one way or another out of harmony with the place or its residents, were therefore banished.

One of the most fleeting of these visitors was a ring-dove. It was very pretty, and it was made personally interesting by a history, being the survivor of a pair blown out to sea, and alighting on a ship five hundred miles from the coast of Africa; but its habits were unbearable. One might have learned to endure the oft-repeated "Coo-o-o! coo! coo! Coo-o-o! coo! coo!" though it was painfully mournful, expressing only longing and regret. But when to that plaintive cry was added a startling and frightful sound like choking or strangling, or, as one listener called it, a fiendish laugh, the bird

rapidly lost favor, and he completed the list of his offences by amusing himself at intervals through the night by a violent and loud flapping of his broad wings, lasting at least half a minute each time, and thoroughly arousing every one within hearing, bird or human. A very few nights ended his stay in the room.

The next sentence of banishment went forth against two bobolinks, which, at the end of a fortnight's coaxing and kindness were still so wild that they were voted idiots unworthy of study. Those few days, however, were enough to show that the two were utterly unlike in disposition. One was an earthly-minded personage, caring for nothing but physical comforts, and quite happy so long as the food-dish was full, the bathing-cup at hand, and no human being near. The other bobolink was of finer quality. So great was his interest in his new surroundings that he could scarcely spend time to eat. Nothing that went on in the room or outside the windows escaped his quick eye, and the manner in which he stretched up on his long legs to look at anything showed plainly his grass-frequenting habits. His amazement when the other birds were flying about was amusing to see.

Also the relation between the two bobolinks was remarkable. The latter bird always took

precedence in everything, assumed the best place as his right, and his cage-mate submitted as a matter of course. Not only was the most desirable perch, the highest and nearest the light, always occupied by the one, but the other bird never intruded even upon the further end of it, which is quite an unusual degree of deference in birds. He did not seem to be in the least afraid, but simply to recognize that his place was that of an inferior. They had come from a large cage full of their kind, so wild and frightened that I could not believe the bird had secured his position by fighting. Both were males, so it was no question of sex. They promised to be an interesting study, excepting for the one fact that they would not make acquaintance. From this was inferred a low degree of intelligence which made them unworthy a place among the several members of the thrush family then occupying the room, and sentence fell upon them accordingly.

Nor was the next venture more fortunate. This was a skylark which came into the house through personal appeal. Looking slowly through the cages of a bird-store, I was suddenly saluted by a faint, melancholy cry from this little bird, standing close to the bars, and looking steadily at me. There is not a bird in such an establishment — unless it be the scream-

ing parrots, who seem quite suited to their surroundings — but draws upon my sympathies. I would gladly buy the whole stock and open every door. But when one apparently singles me out, fearlessly comes as near as possible, and, looking me straight in the face, gives a plaintive cry, I am unable to resist. I bought the skylark, though I did not want him.

I spared no pains to make the stranger happy. I procured a beautiful sod of uncut fresh grass, of which he at once took possession, crouching or sitting low among the stems, and looking most bewitching. He seemed contented, and uttered no more that appealing cry, but he did not show much intelligence. His cage had a broad base behind which he delighted to hide, and for hours as I sat in the room I could see nothing of him, although I would hear him stirring about. If I rose from my seat he was instantly on the alert, and stretched his head up to look over at me. I tried to get a better view of him by hanging a small mirror at an angle over his cage, but he was so much frightened by it that I removed it.

When the lark's door was opened, with the cage on the floor, he went out readily, but he always ran rapidly around the edge of the room in a crouching position, as if he expected every moment to be pounced upon. He was not

afraid; he ate from the fingers and grew quite tame, but he never seemed to know enough to go home. Even when evidently very hungry he would stand before his wide-open door, where one step would take him into his beloved grass thicket, and yet that one step he would not take. When his hunger became intolerable he ran around the room, circled about his cage, looking in, recognizing his food-dishes, and trying eagerly to get between the wires to reach them; yet when he came before the open door he would stand and gaze, but never go in. He sometimes passed three or four hours in this senseless performance, and it was always a trouble to get him home. After five months' trial, during which he displayed no particular intelligence, and never learned to enter his cage, he passed out of the bird-room, but not into a store.

One habit in which this bird indulged was most attractive. It looked like a sort of dance. With both wings beating rapidly, extended their broadest, he gave little hops, not more than two or three inches from the floor, and in this way went all around the room when he happened to be out. If in his cage when the notion seized him, he danced all around in that small space. I never tired of watching this most graceful and beautiful flying dance.

After several failures in finding a bird to my mind, I resolved upon a change, and so introduced to the study a pair of marmosets: they were of the smallest variety, a few inches tall, with little round faces about the size of a silver half-dollar; and, having already been interested in the pranks of a pair in a friend's house, I promised myself much pleasure. I did not select them, and while one was everything I could desire, having an amiable face with a full white fan of hair on each side, a long, perfect tail and fur in good condition, the other had a wicked face, no white fans, and only half a tail. He looked like a tramp, and he proved himself to have something of the character we associate with that sort of personage. He was extremely greedy, and ate like a thief who never expected to have another chance; in a word, he "gobbled." He was always first at the bars when food approached, and he would thrust his droll little hands out, pleading for the first bite, and savagely pulling the hair of his mate if she happened to be nearest and received the first piece. It was of no use to try to administer justice by giving her the precedence, for he fell upon her instantly, snatching the morsel away and making her scream. Generally, therefore, he secured the first portion, a bit of apple or thin slice of banana.

The moment he grabbed his food he snatched a hasty mouthful, never taking his eyes off the dispenser of supplies, threw the rest on the floor, and thrust out the hand to be filled again. Just so long as anything eatable was in sight would he repeat the operation, and to pick up a bit that was dropped never seemed to occur to either of them. Both were very decided in their opinions of food; neither would touch rice, potato or bread; only apple and banana suited their delicate taste, — oh yes! and meal-worms. For the latter delicacy they were absolutely frantic, both pressing against the wires and thrusting forth four droll little pleading hands to receive the dainty, which they devoured as a child disposes of a stick of candy.

On one occasion a fisherman of the family brought home some of his bait, a number of sand-worms of large size, long, tufted and altogether dreadful-looking creatures, measuring six inches or more. Since the marmosets bade fair to cause a meal-worm famine and still remain unsatisfied, I resolved to offer them one of these delicate objects, not much thinking they would accept. But I underrated their ability; they eagerly snatched them and proceeded to gobble them down at once, as rapidly as possible, and with evident relish. Naturally the more greedy of the two quickly finished his

six or eight inches of worm and instantly turned upon the other, who had not made so great progress. Away went the persecuted creature, screaming, tearing around the cage in the most frantic way, and ever close on her heels her relentless tormentor, bent upon snatching away the sweet morsel. He did seize the free end, but she did not relax her hold upon the other, and thereupon ensued a ridiculous struggle,— a wild scramble through the cage, sometimes on one side, and sometimes the other, as the rightful owner or the high-handed robber secured a momentary advantage. The matter was settled, of course, by the separation of the object of dispute, when each of the combatants made haste to dispose of his fragment, and again thrust out his hands for more.

In a few days, I one morning quietly opened the door of the marmosets' cage. The favorite, — the persecuted one, from whom I expected the best behavior — was first to spy this change. She was out like a flash, and without an instant's hesitation, exactly as though she had planned it before, she made a direct line for a bird-cage. All the cages were high, and I had taken the precaution to close every door before I made this experiment. At the first break she climbed up the leg of a table, from there sprang to the back of a chair four feet away, then gave

a bound toward the cage. Misled, — I suppose by the vine-covered wall paper, which she tried to clutch, — she did not jump far enough, and fell heavily to the floor. In a second, however, she was up, and, taking the same route, made a better spring from the chair-back, and landed on the side of the cage. The tenant — a calm thrush — looked at her fearlessly, even drawing nearer as if to question her right to hang upon his cage.

But the little monkey was savage; she thrust a small but cruel hand between the wires as far as she could reach, and not much wisdom was required to know that she would make short work of a bird if she got her fingers upon it. I tried to drive her off, but she scrambled over the other side and eluded me. Then she sprang lightly several feet to another cage, that of a golden-wing woodpecker, who was terribly frightened and beat himself against the wires in uncontrollable panic. This seemed to please the assailant, who clung with such desperation to the cage that I feared I should not get her away before the bird had seriously injured himself. She went from one side to the other so rapidly that it was impossible to catch her, and, for a long time, equally so to drive her off.

Having succeeded at last in getting the run-

away to the floor, I called in help, and, with hastily snatched towels and shawls to impede her movements, we finally captured her in a towel and returned her to her quarters, in which all this time her mate sat quietly, so greatly interested in the flurry of excitement in the room that he never discovered the open door. This was fortunate for me, since there was not help enough in the house to catch two so lively fellows. That escapade settled the fate of the marmosets; as prisoners only could they stay among birds, and prisoners I did not care for.

A beautiful Mexican thrush was for some little time a resident in the bird-room, and I must admit that his beauty won him the place. He was dressed entirely in soft golden browns, dark on the back, lighter below, with fine hair lines on the chin, and bill of greenish olive with lighter tip. His eyes were brownish red, inclosed in circles the color of his breast.

This bird was a thrush in all his manners, deliberate in movement, never in a panic, always calm, whatever happened, and afraid of neither birds nor people. If suddenly startled, he remained in exactly the attitude in which he had been surprised, as if instantly frozen, and thus he stood with perfect patience till his curiosity was satisfied. Sometimes this was

very droll, as once when he had just taken a piece of bread as big as his head from my hand and was about to beat it to pieces on the floor. He stood for some time holding it up in the air with great dignity, his mouth stretched wide, and never thinking to drop his burden, as most birds would do. Not even laughing at him had the smallest effect. There he stood till he was ready to go on with his meal.

The temper of the Mexican, however, was very different from our gentle thrushes, whom in manners he so much resembled. He was fierce and masterful from the beginning, and in a room full of peaceable birds soon became a tyrant and a bully. He would be helped first, or make a great outcry about it, and he would have the best when he was out and could help himself; no one should bathe if he chose to do so, and no one — under any circumstances — should alight on his cage. All these notions he carried out: the habit of having his own way grew upon him, as it does upon people, until he constituted himself general peace-maker, on the principle that "he would have peace if he had to fight for it." The slightest difference of opinion between two birds would bring out his voice in a loud, authoritative "Tut! tut! tut!" while his chin feathers stood erect, his tail and wings jerked excitedly, and his whole plumage

rustled violently. In jerking his tail he alternately spread it like a fan, and closed it up suddenly, while his wings were slightly lifted from his side and brought down sharply.

This thrush was emphatically a bird of one idea; if a finger was pointed at him, he became so absorbed in the contemplation of that phenomenon that one could easily advance the other hand and seize him in it before he noticed it. He did not much care if he was caught, for he feared people no more than birds, seemed to have no doubt of his ability to protect himself, and would bite with a good will. He could not be driven from any position he wished to retain; it was often necessary to fairly push him away.

This thrush's encounter with the looking-glass was of the same fierce nature as all his deeds. He began by pecking, and ended by beating himself against the figure in the glass, fighting and snapping and scolding so violently that he was in danger of bodily injury, and the glass was covered. He was a blusterer about the cages of other birds, and his offensive note was a sharp clatter of the bill, like a pair of castanets. He always reminded me in his manner of a big boy who likes to threaten a little one, and frighten him with the thought that he is about to annihilate him. Exactly in that

way this bird behaved. His encounters with a lively mocking-bird of not half his strength, and his final subjugation by force of mind alone, are elsewhere related.

A most curious little drama and exhibition of bird-character occurred between two canaries, or rather three; and although it did not come under my own eye, it was reported to me by a careful observer, who did watch it from beginning to end. Two singers belonging to two ladies in the same house hung beside a window in their cages — one a small affair of gilt, only large enough for a single bird, the other much larger and plainer. The owner of the large cage thought it would be nice to give her bird a mate, reasoning as do matchmakers who meddle with human affairs: "He has a large house, a living secured, — let us get him a wife!" No sooner said than done (in the case of the canary). Straightway a visit was made to the shops, a bride bought, and placed in his cage.

The new-comer was expected, of course, to accept the goods the gods provide and be thankful, but she proved to have opinions of her own. She resented being set off to anybody; she noted the gay bachelor across the way; possibly she observed his gorgeous cage; at any rate, she plainly decided to have a choice

in the matter. She began by a sweet call, so loud that even the human listeners understood it was not meant for her intended spouse in the cage with her. The bird appreciated it at once, as was evident. He had been charmed to receive her, but that call and the not unwilling answer from the opposite neighbor infuriated him, and he scolded roundly in true, stupid, human fashion, reproaching, instead of trying to win. All the more she turned her attentions to the gay *vis-à-vis*, who answered her calls with joyous replies and much fine singing.

Now began a most curious exhibition of jealousy on the part of the unfortunate master of the large cage, which was carried on for several days. When she took much notice of the stranger over the way, her legal spouse resented it with scolding, blustering, and refusing her at night a foothold on the favorite perch, even pecking her if she attempted to go upon it. If she had been tolerably good during the day, he would allow her to partake of his perch, always, however, gently pushing her to the end farthest away from his rival, and drawing very closely up to her, between her and the enemy. This state of things lasted some days, and no human hand was raised to settle the trouble, for no one suspected the depths of feeling in

those little hearts, nor dreamed of the tragedy which would ensue when matters came to a crisis. That time speedily arrived, and whether madam decided to procure her own divorce, or whether he went mad with rage and jealousy, was not known. The facts are that one morning both birds in the larger cage were found in a terrible, almost dying condition, had apparently been fighting for hours, and feathers were scattered all over the carpet, far from the cage, by the violence of their contest. One did die, — the broken-hearted owner of the cage, whose wooing had been so sad a failure. The other victim of this "marriage of convenience" (may we not call it?) never fully recovered, but lived for some months, and, although never caged, paid no further attention to the tenant of the gilded mansion over the way, and lost her life at last by an accident.

I can easily believe this little history to be true, because I have watched more than one case in my own study, where human and bird wills differed on this point. One pair that resented human interference were English goldfinches. He was a bachelor of most cheerful spirits, entirely satisfied with life and his surroundings in the bird-colony, and she came in a stranger. At first he was not very hospitable, received her with a sort of low hissing sound,

pointing his bill at her, with legs very far apart, and reminding me ludicrously of one of Du Maurier's caricatures, where the husband has on his most "lord-and-mastery" air. She was not at all in awe of him, however, and answered him in the same style.

Considering himself master in his own house, the goldfinch insisted on his prerogatives, first helping of everything, and always the best. She did not fight about it; she seemed satisfied to accept what was left, and to eat at the second table. But as usual, he grew tyrannical; he would not allow her to eat out of the seed-dish at all; she must be contented with what he scattered. Even to this she mutely submitted with the air of not caring enough about it to quarrel. The trouble between them with regard to his singing is spoken of elsewhere in this book. After the disagreement about his musical abilities, it appeared to occur to the heretofore amiable little spouse that it was time for her to rebel; he had become unendurable. She therefore deliberately announced her intentions by establishing herself in the seed-dish, and calmly but resolutely driving him away at the point of the beak. It surprised him, but like bullies of a larger size he gave in upon the first opposition, and it was good for him. It made him modest and well-behaved, and life went on more harmoniously after that.

Another thing the goldfinch learned from his mate, beside good manners, and that was to bathe. He had always contented himself with wetting his bill and passing it through his plumage, and he was astonished when she went into the water and splashed. He stood on the edge of the dish, circling round it in the greatest excitement. I could not tell whether he feared for her safety, or grudged her having so much pleasure out of a thing he did not appreciate. Whatever his motive, she plainly advised him to attend to his own affairs, and spattered as long as she liked. Every day this curious performance was repeated, till at the end of a week he actually roused his courage enough to go in and try it for himself. His pride and delight were droll to see. He called to me, sang little snatches of song while in the water, and splashed nearly every drop out of the dish; and although his transports moderated after a while, he has never from that day, which was four years ago, neglected to take a most thorough bath.

This couple, however, proved to be incompatible; every question that arose had to be quarreled over and settled at the point of the bill, and for the sake of peace the little stranger was given away into a new home.

A RUFFIAN IN FEATHERS

"Death, rude and cruel, intervenes in this book in the full current of life, but as a passing accident only; life does not the less continue." — MICHELET.

X.

A RUFFIAN IN FEATHERS.

We all know Shakespeare's opinion of the "man that hath no music in himself," although we usually misquote it. If this be a fair judgment of the human race, how much more justly may it be said of the bird, to whom we look for the sweetest harmonies of nature!

I do not think his best friend will claim that the common house sparrow has the soul of music in him; certainly not if he has ever been wakened in a glorious dawn by the indescribable jangle of harsh sounds which constitutes this bird's only morning hymn, at the hour when every bird in the woods, from the noble singers of the thrush family down to the least chipping sparrow, is greeting the new day in his most musical fashion.

The matin song of the house sparrow, in which he indulges unsparingly, being of similar quality, harmonizes perfectly with the jarring sounds of man's contriving; the clatter of iron-

shod wheels over city pavements, the war-whoop of the ferocious milkman, the unearthly cries of the venders, and above all the junkman's pandemonium of "bells jangled, out of tune." The harshest cries of our native birds, if not always musical in themselves, seem at least to accord in some way with sounds of nature. The house sparrow alone is entirely discordant, — the one bird without a pleasing note, whose very love-song is an unmusical squeak. Nor is his appearance more interesting than his voice, and on looking into his manners and customs we discover most unlovely characteristics.

One cannot help watching bird-life, however ignoble, which goes on within sight. Sparrows have long been my neighbors, and I have observed many phases of their life, — combats, brawls, forcible divorce, and persecution of the unfortunate. A day or two ago I saw a murder "most foul," and now, while indignation stirs my blood, I will chronicle the ruffian's monstrous deeds.

Near my window is a Norway spruce, which this spring I regretted to see selected by a pair of sparrows for one of their clumsy, straggling nests, to which they brought rubbish of all sorts and colors, from hay of the street to carpet ravelings from the spring house-cleaning, till the tree was greatly disfigured. I do not

know how many broods have been raised there, but early in July I was attracted by cries of infant distress, mingled with harsh parental scolding. On looking out I saw great excitement in the spruce: the mother hopping about with an air of anxiety; the father scolding his loudest, and making constant raids to drive away intrusive neighbors who collected in the next tree. An opera-glass brought the scene near, and I saw at once the cause of the trouble. A nestling had entangled one foot in the edge of the nest, and hung head downwards, calling loudly for help. The mother was evidently trying to coax him to "make an effort," while the stern father was uttering dire threats if he did not conduct himself in a more becoming manner. The poor sparrowling struggled bravely, but every attempt ended in failure, and the little fluffy body drooped more wearily after each trial.

A life is a life, if it is but a sparrow's, and so greatly were my sympathies aroused that I would have dispatched human help to the scene of the accident; but the tree was tall and slender, and the only available climber was a young gentleman, who would laugh to scorn the demand. Nothing could be done but watch the movements of the birds.

The mother perched on a lower branch and

stood quiet, evidently aware that her lord and master would settle the matter. That choleric individual made one or two attempts to aid the youngster, seizing him by his wide-open mouth, and pulling so violently that I thought he would dismember him. All was of no avail. Neighbors crowded nearer; the tree was loaded with interested spectators, and the father grew more and more irritated, till at last he seemed suddenly seized with an irresistible frenzy. With the harshest "chur-r-r" of which he was capable, he pounced upon that unfortunate infant, seizing him by the throat, burying his bill in his breast, shaking him as a dog would shake a rat, and in less than thirty seconds dragged him from his hold and dropped him to the ground, — a dead bird.

I was horrified, and so were the other spectators. Once during the operation the mother had tried to interfere, and was told unmistakably to "mind her own business." Several times the male audience attempted to take part, — whether for or against the victim I could only guess, — but were as summarily disposed of. That little incarnate fury was the tyrant of the moment, and worked his own wicked will to the end.

As soon as the tragedy ended every bird disappeared, and the tree was completely deserted,

as though accursed. The murderer alone did not leave the neighborhood, but strutted back and forth, on an elm which overlooked the scene of his crime; fluttering his wings, calling loud defiance to all the world, in the greatest excitement for hours. Were there no other youngsters in the nest? Were they left to starve? And where was the mother? As to the first query, I could not be sure. Once during the fray I thought I saw something drop from the nest, and I was obliged to conclude that if there had been another it had fallen victim to a passing cat.

In an hour or two the mother came back, as if to put her house in order and resume her duties, but her spouse had other designs. Whether he resented her interference with his lordly will, or whether the late unpleasantness was attributed to her because of defective training or untidy house-building, — whatever the cause, the fact was patent that he had made up his mind to divorce the partner of his sorrows. She appreciated his intention, as was evident from the cautious way in which she approached, looking around for him, and stealing to the nest, as it were, but was resolved to make every effort to induce in him a better spirit and mollify his rage. She did not seem greatly grieved, nor in the least angry. She never opened her mouth to answer back the torrent of reproaches

with which he greeted her, but instantly retired before his fierce onslaught. Not once did that fiery spirit go to the ground for food, or lose sight of his nest. Most of the time he perched on a branch of the elm, where he could overlook the spruce and be ready for intruders; but occasionally he went by his usual alighting-places to the empty home, clearing out beakfuls of small downy feathers, and apparently setting his house in order.

But the strange little bird-drama, suggestive, alas, of some phases of human passion, was not yet concluded. Many times during the day the divorced spouse came near, as if to survey her late home, and see if her lord was in a more amiable mood; but she found him utterly remorseless, ever on guard to repel all attempts to "make up." When at last, after the long hours of night had calmed his savage temper, his mood did change, it was not to her that he turned for sympathy. He would not forgive, but he had no notion of remaining a pining widower. Before evening the next day he went a-wooing, and there appeared upon the spruce-tree, with the evident purpose of examining the home and assuming possession, a dainty young bird. It had taken that disreputable sparrow less than thirty-six hours to kill his baby, divorce his wife, and woo and bring home a bride!

It may be a matter of surprise that one can distinguish between birds, but it is not at all difficult when their habits are watched closely. I knew the new wife from the old one in two ways: first, the old one, after the labors of bringing up a brood or two, was worn and ragged, while the new-comer was fresh as a daisy, and fluffy and young-looking as a nestling; second, she approached the nest in a different way. It is true of sparrows, however it may be with other birds, that each one has his special alighting-places, — a certain twig where he first settles, and certain others on which, as a flight of steps, he invariably proceeds to his nest. The mother of the dead infant always came to the home from the right side, and her grim tyrant does so still, but the bride selected a convenient series of twigs on the left side.

It is now four or five days since the crime was committed, and, although the new spouse is perfectly at home and settled, peace, even to the extent that a sparrow enjoys it, is still a stranger to the spruce-tree nest. I think it is haunted by the discarded mate. Certainly a sparrow, that I have no doubt is she, comes to the neighborhood, and scolds the meek-looking bride and her spouse in most savage fashion. No one resents her performance, and after a moment she goes away.

A TRAGEDY IN THE MAPLE-TREE

"Though ignorant of their language, it was not difficult for us to perceive that they differed among themselves." — MICHELET.

XI.

A TRAGEDY IN THE MAPLE-TREE.

ONE of my windows looks into a large yard, with trees so thick that when the foliage is out I cannot see the street, from which the roar of vehicles alone reminds me that I am in the closely-built city. The birds are fond of this pleasant green nook, and here I have often studied their ways.

Early in May of last year I had the good fortune to see what was to me then a new phase of sparrow-life, — a domestic quarrel ending in separation, and a wooing ending in marriage. The scene of the drama was a home established in a hole in the trunk of a maple-tree twenty feet from my window. It is where a branch has been taken off, and the opening is perhaps three inches long and two wide.

In the three years I have watched it I have felt peculiar interest in that nest, from its cozy situation, and have taken more notice of the little housekeepers than of any who occupy

rooms in the pagodas, palaces, and balconied cottages nailed up in the trees around us. In the spring, house-cleaning and new furnishing began, as usual, in the most amicable way. There was an embarrassment of riches in materials, for, after the young pair had collected enough to fill half a dozen nests at least, they discovered a treasure somewhere in the neighborhood, and, throwing out that already in use, they labored industriously in bringing great beakfuls of white feathers, such as are used in pillows, and everything seemed prosperous and harmonious.

But one morning, upon taking my usual seat after breakfast, I saw with surprise that there was trouble in the maple-tree family. The cock sat on a twig outside the door, puffed out like a ball, scolding and chattering in his harshest tones, while nothing was to be seen of the hen. Indeed, for some time I could not tell whether the quarrel was with her, or with some intruder, for through the whole affair which followed she never opened her mouth to answer him, nor apparently paid the slightest attention to all his blustering.

It was curious to watch him ; he would bustle up to the door, spread his tail, rattle the feathers of his wings, and shake all over, as if furious with rage ; then he would draw back,

hop to another branch which approached the door in a slanting direction, and beginning at the upper end glide down for perhaps a foot with imperceptible motion of his feet, quivering all over, and constantly calling in a loud harsh voice, as though daring or commanding her to come out. This had gone on for a long time, and still she refused to show her head, when a thought seemed to strike him. He flew away as though not intending to return, but silently perched on a twig half way around the trunk, where he could not be seen from the door. His calls had ceased, and he was evidently hiding, ready to pounce upon her. This seemed not quite to his mind, however, for he could not see the door; so he took his position on the trunk itself, a little above the nest, where the lost branch had left a protuberance. Here he could hold on, with difficulty, and here he stayed in silence, looking earnestly at the door of his house till madam appeared and quietly hopped on to a neighboring twig, as calm and unruffled as a summer morning. She began to arrange her feathers with utmost deliberation, but at the first movement of her angry spouse she darted into the nest again. Then he stormed violently, paraded before the door in his most insulting manner, stretched his neck, and fairly made faces at her, opening his mouth, and looking as though he would devour her.

Still the little wife refused to be bullied into a fight, and after a while the small assailant was obliged to go to the ground for food to sustain the strength on which his passion was drawing so severely. As soon as he was gone she came out, and after arranging her feathers a moment coolly flew down for her own breakfast. With opera-glass in hand I now watched with deepest interest. No sooner would the rustle of his wings be heard, returning, than like a brown streak she rushed in ahead of him, not stopping to alight as usual, but dashing in on the wing. At this his anger was fearful. He sometimes alighted on the threshold, as if to defy her, but suddenly his wings fluttered, and he jerked away, as though she had seized his foot. He then returned to a perch, and resumed his former proceedings. These actions were kept up the whole day. I could not watch them every moment, but I looked frequently, and always found the contest proceeding in the same way. At bed-time she was in the nest, and he went away.

The next morning the struggle was still progressing, with a difference. The hen had become more bold, or more careless, and the cock more desperate. She would go out and leave the nest, and let him come home and find it empty. Now was his chance, if he wished to

seize the citadel; but that did not seem to be his object. He stood on a branch before the door, stretched his neck to look in, even sometimes alighted on the steps, but never once entered. He seemed to intend to drive his mate away, and prevent her from returning. To this end, apparently, he seated himself so near the door that he could not fail to seize her if she tried to pass in.

For a time the plotter was all attention; not a rustle but he heard, not a moving leaf but he saw it, and was on the alert. Now appeared much cunning on the part of that imperturbable dame. Not a sign of her could be seen, not a sound heard; she might be a mile away; till, growing careless, he turned to give his feathers a peck, when instantly, from some hiding-place in the tree, she swept around and into the door. Then followed a wild flutter of wings, and he flung himself in transport of rage against the entrance, but she was safely within, and he had a wholesome respect for her ability to defend herself in her own nest. Even when he stood in the very doorway, as he did later, she managed to surprise him, and dash in over his head.

I wondered that the neighbors did not interfere, as sparrow neighbors are apt to do; and once or twice on this day a bird did approach the scene of the trouble, perching a few feet

away, as if to see what was going on, but the master of the house flew at him so viciously that he at once retired.

On the afternoon of the second day he began to try stratagem. After a longer absence than usual he returned with a young-looking hen, who seated herself demurely in plain sight, a foot or two from the door. This did not please the dame; she thrust her head out for the first time, and gave the stranger a piece of her mind that caused her to fly away, although the irate husband "talked back" to his wife in the most insulting way. Then he seated himself before the door and began to call; a loud, peculiar cry, quite different from that he had been addressing to his mate. In a few moments two young hens came near, and perched in sight. Then he blustered before the nest, and scolded more violently than ever, as if to show that he was master of his own house; but except putting her head out and making a few remarks to the visitors, the spouse did nothing.

The next stratagem was amusing. I suppose the little tormentor thought his victim must be hungry, for he flew away, and returned, laboriously carrying a piece of bread as big as his head. With this he perched in his usual place, and, instead of eating it himself, deliberately dropped it to the ground, evidently to tantalize

her. As plainly as though he said it, he expected her to dash out after it; but when she did not, he scorned to touch it, and the neighbors disposed of the morsel. Twice he tried this manœuvre, and both times unsuccessfully.

While things were at this stage, I was, to my great regret, obliged to be absent a few hours, and when I returned the difference was nearly settled; the master was going in and out of the nest freely, and the mistress was nowhere to be seen. He seemed to be cleaning house, in preparation for a new *régime*. He was bringing out the feathers he had so carefully carried in, and scattering them to the winds. It was curious to see the struggle between avarice and revenge, in the longing looks he gave them as they fluttered to the ground; sometimes the temptation was irresistible, and a feather that was really too nice was pursued, and returned to the homestead.

Twice during this performance the hen came back for a moment and perched on the end of a branch three feet from her late residence, but he flew at her fiercely, and she at once left. It did not seem that she was kept away by force, but she had the air of thinking "the game not worth the candle." She appeared not the least angry, nor even cast down, nor a feather ruf-

fled, while his plumage was in such a state that he looked like a vagabond, or bird-tramp. When she wished to depart, and her curiosity about his doings was satisfied, she flew gayly away, descended to the ground, and employed herself in gathering her food with her usual calmness. Of course, the only way I could tell her from a thousand other sparrows was by his treatment of her.

But now the house was swept and garnished, the victor, with unseemly haste, devoted himself to the task of wooing a bride. He had no idea of keeping bachelor's hall, and possibly his fancy for another had been the cause of the trouble. After a short absence he brought back a gay young creature, brighter in color and somewhat smaller than the discarded wife. It was interesting to see his coaxing, there was so much of what we call human nature in it. He stood by the door and called her quite gently, while she, daintily and with many pauses, hopped nearer and nearer, till just when another hop or two would have brought her to the door she suddenly flew away, and he after her. Soon they returned, and the same scene was repeated. This time, may be, with many pauses of affected indifference, and looks of intense interest directed to some other part of the world, she would get as far as the door of the

house, even perhaps look in an instant before she flew away again. After a little he went into the nest himself and called. She would alight on the step, hesitate, then turn her eyes to every side of the horizon to see that no enemy was in sight, and at last, after getting as far as this several times and flying away again, she entered, when instantly he came out, followed by her open bill. She had driven him out of his own home! Evidently, in the sparrow family, the home is the wife's castle.

But the suitor did not object. Apparently all he wanted was to have her assume command of the mansion, for while she examined her proposed new home he stood before the door, swelled, shook himself out, twisted, and bowed to her in a most grotesque way, all the time calling. Soon she came out, and after pluming herself a moment, flew off. Then the whole scene was reënacted, except that after she had so far committed herself as to enter the nest he no longer thought it necessary to follow her when she flew away. He stayed to guard the door, and in a short time called her back. After an hour of this sort of coquetting the thing was settled, and she accepted her home and her lover. He smoothed down his ruffled coat, they settled into a most exemplary couple, and

the nest in the maple-tree was once more the abode of peace and quietness.

The thing that interested me, and that I tried in vain to find out, was, What became of that outraged little spouse turned out of her home?

TROUBLE IN THE HONEYSUCKLES.

"Then smiling to myself I said, —
How like are men and birds!"

WHITTIER.

XII.

TROUBLE IN THE HONEYSUCKLES.

A LITTLE later in the same year I had the rare opportunity of watching from beginning to end another drama in sparrow-life. The first intimation I had of trouble was loud and persistent chirping, a cry of distress. For some time I could not get sight of the bird, but just at evening, when I was looking closely at a pear-tree out of which the sound came, a cock-sparrow flew out, alighting on the peak of a low roof in my sight, and resumed at once the very sound I was in search of. He was the one in trouble, and the reason was plain — he had lost a leg.

He stayed on the roof some time, uttering at short intervals the pitiful cry, and at last, flying to the pear-tree again, established himself in an angle formed by two twigs starting horizontally from the same point. Here he settled himself comfortably after some fluttering, and here he remained.

The first thing in the morning, I heard again the sorrowful cry, and hastened to the window to see how he appeared, and if possible find out where he lived. He had left the tree and seated himself on the ledge over a false window plainly visible from my chair. The sill, the upper ledge and the edge of the roof overhead were the scene of the whole drama that followed. From his at-home manner in that spot I concluded that he lived near, for I have noticed that sparrows usually have a particular place on which to alight before going into the nest. They perch a moment, look around, flirt the tail and then dash into the house.

While I watched, a hen-sparrow alighted near the sufferer, scolding harshly, upon which he flew away, and she followed. He alighted upon the pear-tree; she perched near him and talked to him, not in the scolding tone that had driven him away from the ledge, but in a remonstrating or arguing way. He answered her in a low conversational chirp, but when she drew nearer he again took wing.

This performance continued all day. The wife did not appear to be angry or trying to drive him away, but neither did she seem to sympathize with his troubles. It looked as if she was urging him to do something, I could not make out what. He kept almost entirely to

the ledge and the sill, and now I saw that they lived in a thick clump of honeysuckle vines that ran over a doorway not more than three feet from the sill where he had taken his position. Once or twice he entered the honeysuckles, when there ensued a great chattering, and he came out.

It was pitiful to see the poor little creature, and hear his loud cry all day. He lay flat on his breast, his head often drooped, and I thought he was dying. Every little while the hen came to visit him, alighting near him, sometimes quietly talking, sometimes scolding, on which he would fly away. This day also I saw that the hen carried food into the honeysuckles, and I concluded she had babies to feed, and perhaps her remonstrances with him had been that he did not help. Evidently she had a good deal on her hands, hungry babies and a disabled spouse.

He was very awkward on his one leg, could not stand up a moment, and when he moved used his wings violently. Several times he fell off the window sill, but caught himself by means of his wings and flew back. Much of the time he lay with his bill open, and looked so weak I thought he could not live another day. But the next morning a new emotion came to brace him up, inducing him to do what Mrs. Dombey failed in — "make an effort."

Madam evidently made up her mind to shake off a useless partner, and early in the day a rival appeared on the scene. The cock who assumed this despicable *rôle* was a tumbled-up sort of a fellow, who looked as though he needed a wife to keep his coat in order, and I had my doubts whether that little hen had made a wise choice. He alighted on the sill, One-leg being on the ledge above. Here he planted himself in a dogged way, in a crouching attitude, and called, though not with the least spirit. His feathers were ruffled, not bristled up in anger or in fighting style; and from his whole appearance I could not resist the conviction that he was a hen-pecked coward ordered to go out and fight, and dutifully, but not heartily, obeying.

The knowing bird on the ledge evidently despised him. He answered him call for call, and louder than his challenger, but did not deign to attack him till the ragged-looking fellow attempted to enter the honeysuckles, when instantly the little hero flew furiously at him and he retired. Then madam came out and scolded her spouse, and he returned to his ledge to rest and get his breath.

After a while another candidate for her favor arrived upon the sill. This was a different looking bird, for much alike as are sparrows there are variations of manner and looks readily

seen on close examination. The second wooer was as bright and full of life as one could be. He looked saucily at the unfortunate he had come to cut out, bristled up and delivered his call in a loud, defiant tone, and was ready to battle at once for the home in the honeysuckles. This fellow too was a more formidable foe in the eyes of the poor little cock on the ledge. He did not answer his challenge; he crouched low against the house; his head sank, and it seemed that his last moments had arrived.

So perhaps thought the rival, for he flew boldly into the vines. That roused the drooping hero. In defense of his hearthstone he would rise almost from the dead. He flew instantly and drove the intruder away, returning at once to his post. After a little, madam herself alighted on the sill with her suitor in full view of her despised spouse; but he put them to rout like a whirlwind.

On this day he took possession of a new stand, on the corner of the roof, where he could overlook the window and also the honeysuckle vines on both sides. There he remained a long time calling, and driving away those who presumed to interfere with his domestic affairs. This was an exciting day about the honeysuckles, full of challenges, scoldings, furious attacks and probably, too, suffering, for the little

hero often seemed exhausted and utterly unable to endure his accumulated calamities.

Once, toward night, madam alighted in the usual place with one who was plainly a lover. He began to puff out his feathers and assume the airs of a wooer, when down from his post on the roof came the avenging husband and drove him away in a twinkling. The hen did not fly, however, and her spouse alighted near her. She began to scold, but he tried to make love to her. "Come," said his manner, "let 's make up; I shall not always be so helpless as now." But every time he tried to approach her she turned her bill toward him, talking vigorously. "You 're a good-for-nothing," one could almost hear her say; "you 'll neither help me yourself nor let any one else, and here I 'm nearly worked to death and the babies like to starve." Then he coaxed again, but she refused him harshly and flew to the nest.

This curious scene took place toward evening, but the next morning things had changed. He was better and brighter everyway, could get about much more easily on his one leg, and I saw no more of rivals. He went in and out of the honeysuckles quite often. Sometimes he was greeted by a scolding and sometimes by the shrill chirping of the little ones, but he went as often as he chose. Under this new as-

pect of things he began to woo back his mate, and after a while she came out on the window sill in amiable mood, and great love-making went on. Evening closed on restored peace and harmony in the little household.

The next morning the little hero was able to hop upon the greenhouse roof for crumbs, standing up pertly on his single leg, though his movement was a queer one-sided sort of jerk, which gave him a most comical air. Now his spouse accompanied him to the ground and the pear-tree, as do all decorous sparrow wives, and before noon both devoted themselves to the charming task of teaching the little ones to fly.

Often during the day I saw one little fussy sparrowling squatted on the window sill which had been the scene of his papa's suffering and pain, another on the greenhouse roof, both shrieking for food, for help, for the world to see how bravely they got on, while the busy mamma coaxed them in vain to try another flight, alternately encouraging with a crumb or reproving with a slight peck on the head, and the one-legged hero — his troubles now happily at an end — perched on the edge of the roof, peering over with greatest interest at the pretty scene.

THE BIRD OF THE STREET

"Dusky sparrows in a crowd,
Diving, darting northward free,
Suddenly betook them all,
Every one to his hole in the wall,
Or his niche in the apple-tree."

EMERSON.

XIII.

THE BIRD OF THE STREET.

As I said, the sparrow is a domestic tyrant, brooking no opposition. I have never observed a case in which the hen had her own way. He is so great a bully, so self-willed and violent, that, whatever the cause of disagreement, he holds out with dogged obstinacy till he gets his will. In one case there was difference of opinion as to the site for a nest; he wishing to occupy an empty cottage of man's providing, while she, with finer instinct, had decided upon a charming crotch in an evergreen tree. At first she opposed him strongly, scattering the material he brought, throwing the choicest bits to the winds, while he stormed and scolded, and — brought more. In the intervals between thwarting his plans, she would accumulate materials in the chosen tree. He scorned to touch them; he simply ignored her designs, and proceeded with obstinacy almost sublime to bring, and bring, and bring, till she was worn out, gave up, and accepted the cottage at last.

The tree in which took place the murder already narrated was the scene in another season of a curious proceeding. It seemed to be the starting of the young family out in the world for themselves; and whether it is usual to have so serious a time over that matter and I have not chanced to notice it, or whether the family was specially self-willed, does not appear. The facts are as follows. Attracted to my window by the ordinary sparrow outcry, I saw a motherly-looking hen sparrow in great excitement, blustering, fluttering her wings, and scolding loudly, while four or five sparrowlings, completely feathered and able to fly, seemed to be the objects of her wrath. She rushed after one, making the most hostile demonstrations, but when she came so near as to be dangerous it simply hopped to another branch, not in the least concerned. Turning her attention to a second she pursued it in the same way, and in the same indifferent fashion it avoided her, but did not appear alarmed.

After long watching of this sort of warfare I concluded it was her own brood, and that, desiring to nest again, she was trying to convince them that they must seek a residence for themselves. But plainly, also, the youngsters, accustomed to tender motherly care, could not get into their fluffy brown heads that she could

possibly be serious, and really intend to turn her own babies out into the cold world. They were very pretty. I did not know how bright a young sparrow is before it is soiled with the dust of the street. They were beautifully marked in rich golden brown with a light shade of the same color, the breast was nearly white, the plumage soft and fresh, and the head of particularly graceful shape and every way attractive.

All the afternoon the sparrow mother worked at this business of disposing of her family cares, but no sooner did she drive away one of her brood than another returned, even trustingly following her back when she had chased it to the next tree; and at evening I observed that they all calmly placed themselves on their native spruce for the night.

All this time the lord of the nest had not appeared, but in the morning he took the field, and it was evident, from the spirit he showed in his work, that he intended to put a speedy end to the affair. His manner was not exactly what it usually is towards an enemy, though to be sure it would be hard to proceed against four in the same way as against one. He assumed his most warlike attitude, feathers bristled up, wings trailing, back bent downward like a bow, and tail pointed toward the sky.

In this absurd style he hopped about the tree, calling and scolding and making noise enough for half a dozen birds. Now and then he made a dive for a little one who came too near, but most of the time he contented himself with bluster and a general state of protest against their impertinence.

As for the youngsters, they were not in the least alarmed ; they hopped about, and ate and squabbled within a foot of irate papa. If he rushed at one, the pursued simply flew to the other side of the tree. Evidently his threats were not at all terrifying. It was most curious to see, because a moment's serious attack would frighten one of those little ones out of sight. It was plainly evident that he wanted to drive them away (probably to make room for another brood, since it was early), yet, after all, he was proud of their pluck and spirit, and he could not resist a lurking tenderness for them.

Still, he kept up the appearance of hostility. Now and then he ran madly down a branch as though about to annihilate somebody, but no one happening to be there, no one was hurt. When one infant did fly before him, he invariably stretched his neck to watch the flight, apparently to see if the little one arrived safely. It was most interesting to see the struggle between the fond parent and the inexorable judge determined to drive them away.

During his efforts, the mother was watching the progress of events from a neighboring tree. Occasionally, when one of the babies alighted on her side of the evergreen, she flew at it, and it changed position. It was clear that the youngsters knew what was expected of them, but did not choose to accept their fate.

Sometimes the mother alighted on a low branch, and went up the tree in a spiral course, driving all the family before her; but when the branches began to be uncomfortably small near the top, or they thought they had gone high enough, they coolly took wing and all alighted below the mother, so that she was forced to begin at the beginning again.

In general the young were perfectly silent, and all the noise came from the parents, but once or twice a baby cock-sparrow showed some of the spirit of his papa by "answering back;" upon which that personage fell upon the saucy one, who vanished through the branches, one hardly knew how, showing plainly that he knew when an attack was serious.

At length, toward the end of the day, the father of the family perched on a tree overlooking the disputed homestead and began to shake himself out and put his ruffled plumage in order. Obviously he felt that his labors were over and he could rest; and certainly not a

youngster was in sight. But while I looked, there was a sudden flutter of wings, and four little sparrows swept around the corner of the house and alighted in the old tree. "Oh dear! here they are again!" was plainly expressed by a few harsh notes, a craned neck, and a discouraged pause in his operations.

After the second day the little group of four was suddenly enlarged to eight or nine, and I supposed that some other abandoned younglings had joined the spruce-tree babies. Wherever they came from, they were as intimate as one family, chattering softly among themselves, flying together in a little flock, and all bent on making that particular tree their headquarters.

For nine days I watched this contest going on, a little less vigorously as the days went by, but never quite given up on either side. I could not see that nesting was begun again, and I did not notice another brood in the tree that season. I think the parents were disheartened and made a nest elsewhere. After a few days of street life the fresh young birds were dusty as their parents. The neighborly alliance still continued, and the strangers seemed to adopt the cause of the triumphant babies as their own.

Often the whole little flock of eight or nine alighted on the tree, crept to the inner branches

where they were not readily seen, and remained perfectly silent. Then in a few moments the old sparrow, who doubtless saw the performance, pounced upon the tree in a rage, when suddenly the outer branches blossomed with young sparrows ready to take flight. Occasionally a saucy youngster perched on a lower branch and set up an altogether "grown-up" call. Instantly the "old man" came down through the branches in hot haste, exactly as though he felt insulted. Could it be that the young rogue intended to "mock" the papa?

Sometimes, during these exciting times, the mother joined her family on the next tree, and talked with them in low tone, without anger. Was it remonstrance for their undutiful behavior, or good advice for the future?

A curious little exhibition of sparrow philosophy was given by two of these young ones, sitting side by side on a small branch which sloped sharply toward the trunk. The one highest on the branch naturally crowded down against the other, and when it became too uncomfortable the lower one, instead of fighting, simply stepped on the back of his brother, and took the upper place himself. In a few moments the lower one found himself crowded, and availed himself of the same method of relieving the discomforts of his position.

The female sparrow is usually a modest little soul, as might be expected in one always "kept down," and so outshrieked by her mate that she is rarely heard. Next to the tree which the murderer considers his own is another spruce, which for some reason is very attractive to the hens, who search among the twigs and take something in their mouths; whether insect or part of the vegetable growth I am unable to say positively. Whatever it may be, it has no interest for the masculine sparrow. There are often as many as a dozen females there at once, and I have been delighted with this opportunity to observe them apart from their obstreperous spouses, who are so self-assertive that they give their mates no chance at all. I find that their voices are less harsh than the male tones. Their chatter among themselves is quite soft, as is also their "baby-talk," which I hear when a mother has her young family out. The most pleasing sound I ever noticed from one of the house-sparrow tribe was from a solitary female on that tree. She kept up a continual soliloquy, gentle, almost sweet. It was not a call; simply a little talk with herself.

One of the most familiar habits of this graceless bird is his delight in a mob. No sooner does anything occur to disturb the even tenor

of sparrow-life, whether a domestic skirmish, the first outing of a young family, or some danger to a nest, than a crowd collects, not merely as interested spectators, but quite ready and willing to take a hand in any sport or crime that is going; not only a hand, but a voice as well. Loud cries always announce when a rabble is at work. Whether, as declared by some observers, they drive away our native birds by this means I am not sure. I have seen them annoy the cat-bird, the robin, and the Baltimore oriole, but in each case they were put to flight by the native bird; though no doubt the experience is sufficiently disagreeable to induce either of these birds to select a more retired neighborhood for nest-building. I once noticed the same tactics successfully applied to a cat which climbed up among the nests.

Even his courtship is carried on in mob style. Little combats of half a dozen or more of sparrows on the ground are a common sight of our city streets in the spring. Many have noticed that the belligerents were all males, and their efforts directed against one female, but closer watching reveals the motive behind the action. The noisy, screaming crowd are not her enemies, they are her lovers; each one desires her undivided attention, and attempts to secure it in the only way possible to a rowdy-

ish fellow like himself, — by violence and rough demonstration. He struts about in the absurd sparrow fashion of making love, and finding that she is not sufficiently impressed he gives her a savage peck, as if to say, "Look at me!" At the same moment a suitor on the other side, equally anxious to attract her notice, delivers a similar rude reminder of his presence. This being their method of wooing, when several birds set their hearts on the same individual she has an exceedingly tempestuous time till she has made her selection, and to a careless observer it appears as if they had combined to annihilate her, instead of to offer her the choice of a mate.

An amusing instance in which the birds were worsted took place under my eye last summer. Hearing the usual outcry one morning, I looked out, and saw a great crowd of sparrows perched on the branches of a tall maple-tree, shrieking at the top of their voices, craning their necks, and hopping ever nearer to one of the houses so kindly provided for their use. It was not one of the four-story hotel arrangements with which we disfigure our trees, but a single cottage, with room for but one couple, and it was quite high up in the tree. The excitement centred around this house, and for a long time I could not see what was the disturbing cause. Close

watching with a glass at length revealed a small reddish head, with very sharp eyes, occupying the doorway of the cottage, and after some time the owner of these features calmly stepped out on the veranda and showed himself, — a small red squirrel, with a silver collar, which proclaimed him an escaped pet. He looked thin, with a tail almost as bare as a rat's. He had evidently not fared well in captivity, and I rejoiced in his freedom.

But the sparrow world had decided to eject him from the neighborhood, and faithfully, with true sparrow doggedness, they worked at this problem. No sooner did he appear than they resumed their attack, flying around him, screaming and making quick dashes at him. He was somewhat disconcerted, and ran up a long branch, followed by the whole gang, which grew more bold as he apparently retreated, dashing ever nearer as though to peck him, but never actually touching him. While he was running they were very bold, but the moment he sat up and faced them they drew off a little, though they never went quite away. For several days not a movement of his escaped their notice. It was amusing to see how quickly the smallest stir on his part was announced to the world. "There he is! He's coming out!" one could easily understand, and every sparrow

within hearing responded by instantly deserting his business or pleasure, and adding his presence and cries to the mob.

But the squirrel, finding fruit-trees with green apples and pears, resolved to stay, and after a week or two they became so far accustomed to his presence as to be less alarmed, though they never lost interest in him. His eating especially seemed to divert and astonish them. I have seen fifty birds at once hovering around an evergreen tree, too small to afford them perching-places far enough from the enemy, while he gathered and nibbled the small cones. When he sat up on a branch, holding a green pear in his tiny paws, their amusement knew no bounds. They sat around at a safe distance, exchanging remarks, in the amiable manner of some of the human race at the ways of a foreigner.

The squirrel had by this time resumed his wild instincts, cared nothing for them, and would even answer back with a sharp little cry. He had taken up his summer residence in the maple-tree cottage, and all through the fall, while pears hung on the trees of the neglected yard next ours, he lived in clover. His tail became bushy, his coat grew sleek, and he looked like a different animal. Still the sparrows attended his every movement, following him like

a train of courtiers wherever he went, though they did not make quite so much noise about it as at first.

The household became as keenly interested as the birds in the doings of the pretty fellow. All through the winter he appeared on the mild days, running and bounding over the tall maples. We saw him gather grass and carry it off in great bundles in his mouth to make a bed, and after an unusually cold season he spent part of two days in removing his residence from an ornamental pile of stones in a neighbor's yard to warmer quarters he had discovered under the house. He had evidently collected a quantity of stores of some sort. No doubt as soon as spring opened he would vary his diet with fresh eggs, but as I left the vicinity I did not have opportunity to observe whether the sparrow family suffered from him, though I noticed that he had changed his dwelling to the hole in the maple already described as the scene of a family broil.

I did, however, have one more glimpse of the squirrel quite late in the summer, although at a distance of half a mile from the scene of the above-mentioned exploits. Being one day attracted to a window by the familiar sound of a sparrow turmoil, I saw the birds of the neighborhood repeating the performance I had ob-

served on the first appearance of the little beast, and a close look revealed the presence of the red-coated enemy himself, as lively and bright as ever. There happened to be an unbroken line of shade-trees from the spot in which I had first seen him to that in which he now appeared, and he had probably made the entire trip without once descending to the ground.

In their usual pleasing manner of announcing the presence of a visitor, the sparrows one day introduced a small owl. It was in February, and most of the trees were bare, but the queer little fellow had taken refuge in the close branches of the spruce-tree before my windows.

At first I could not discover the cause of all the disturbance, fifty or sixty sparrows hopping about in one tree, and more arriving every moment, all screaming at the top of their voices. A close look, however, revealed the little stranger in soft gray and white, about eight inches high, — the mottled owl, I think, — beautiful and fluffy looking, drawn snugly back against the trunk. During the remainder of that day, and all of the next, being part of the time on that tree, and part on a tall leafless maple across the street, the poor little wanderer was persecuted by the mobbers, who scarcely for a moment left him in peace, though, as usual

with them, they confined themselves to threats and annoyings, while he kept still.

He did not seem to mind their demonstrations so long as they did not actually touch him. Many times in that thirty-six hours I looked at his quaint, wise-looking little face, as it turned this way and that to look with interest at the howling and shrieking rabble about him, undismayed by the confusion, though it must have been sadly trying to his peace-loving soul. But the next morning he was gone, having waited till the noisy crowd was asleep, and then "silently stolen away."

Next to the sparrow's mobbing propensity is his impudence. Not only will he insist on sharing the food of chickens and domestic animals, but he is a common guest at the table of the great bald eagles in the parks, and does not disdain the crumbs that fall from the repast of the polar bear, one touch of whose paw would flatten him like a wafer.

Perhaps the most saucy thing reported of a sparrow was witnessed in Brooklyn by a well-known artist. He was watching a robin hard at work on the lawn, gathering food for his family, when he noticed a sparrow, who also seemed interested in the operation. The sparrow looked on, evidently with growing excitement, while one bit after another was uncovered, till at last

a particularly large and attractive grub was brought to light. This was too much for sparrow philosophy. He made one dash, snatched the tempting morsel from the very bill of the robin, and disappeared before the astounded bird recovered from his surprise.

With this unparalleled act of impertinence to a bird big enough to eat him, this true chronicle of the most unattractive fellow that wears feathers shall close.

"THESE ARE YOUR BROTHERS."

"Beloved of children, bards and spring,
O birds, your perfect virtues bring, —
Your song, your forms, your rhythmic flight,
Your manners for the heart's delight;
Nestle in hedge, or barn, or roof,
Here weave your chamber weather-proof.
Forgive our harms, and condescend
To man, as to a lubber friend,
And, generous, teach his awkward race
Courage and probity and grace!"

EMERSON.

XIV.

"THESE ARE YOUR BROTHERS."

A WELL-KNOWN French man of letters wrote a book, nearly thirty years ago, with the express object to "reveal the bird as soul, to show that it is a person," in the hope of diminishing the enormous slaughter for purposes of personal adornment, of ministering to our appetites, adding to our collections, or, worst of all, gratifying our love of murder, pure and simple, by whatever name we choose to dignify the taking of life for our own amusement. To this noble man's effort every lover of birds, for higher uses than to put in the stomach or on the shelf, should add his chronicle, however unpretending.

It is a mystery how men with hearts tender to suffering can be so carried away by the excitement of the hunt as to lose sight of the terror and pain of the victim. Many hunters have confessed to a return to their better selves the moment the chase was won. In what does this

short madness differ from the sudden rage which impels one to lift his hand against the life of man, merely a (should be) nobler game? It seems even more strange that a gentle woman can endure the beautiful plumage of a delicate winged creature, whose sweet life of song and joy was rudely cut short by brutal men that the poor dead body might shine among her laces. For those who are willing to gratify their palate at the cost of so much beauty and music there is nothing to be said, — they cannot be reached. Not until man has outgrown the barbarism of nourishing his body at the expense of his soul can we hope to touch those who *eat* birds. It is sad enough to turn our murderous weapons against the gentle ox that trusts us, the innocent-faced sheep, and the honest-eyed calf, but to rob the world of an inspiring robin or a rollicking bobolink, for the small bits of flesh under their feathers, is too pitiful.

"Open your eyes to the evidence," says Michelet. "Throw aside your prejudice, your traditional and derived opinions. Dismiss your pride, and acknowledge a kindred in which there is nothing to make one ashamed. What are these? They are your brothers."

The following notes are based upon several years' study of birds enjoying the freedom of a

large room, without attempting to tame them, further than, by letting alone, to inspire confidence and dispel fear.

The most noticeable thing about birds is their individuality; even those of the same family differ as greatly as children of a household. One goldfinch that I have studied is a shy, timid little creature, utterly unresponsive to its human neighbors, while another is the embodiment of gayety, brimming over with good spirits, and always ready to answer a greeting with a cheerful "Pick-wick." This bird is extremely fond of human society, and after being without it for an hour or two will pour out a torrent of greetings in his loudest voice, wriggling his body from side to side, as though too full of joy to keep still. Even in times of adversity, when he is moulting (which he does with difficulty), and his wings fail of their office, so that on setting out for his favorite perch, after the bath, he flies wide of the mark, beating the air vainly, and at last fluttering to the floor, where he never willingly goes, — even then he will hasten to a ladder placed for him, hop up round after round, stopping now and then to call out gleefully, as if to say, "I'm not hurt a bit! I'm all right!" When at last the time comes that he does not try to fly, he cheerfully avails himself of a series of perches running around

the room, and takes his exercise as blithely as though he had never known wings.

Next neighbor to the goldfinch is a cardinal grosbeak, a fellow of different temperament. He is a cynic, morose and crusty. His world is hollow and his cage is his castle, which he declines to leave for an instant, although the door stands open from morning till night. Above all, he is captious on the subject of his rights, and insists on having them respected. To have a bird perch near his door is offensive in the extreme, and alighting on his cage is a crime which stirs him to fury. He despises his restless neighbors, and feels no need of exercise himself. He sits — not stands, like most birds — on his chosen perch hour after hour, leaving it only to eat; and I think that if his food were within reach of this seat he would not rise half a dozen times a day. His only recreation is music, in which he indulges freely; and his song has a curious quality of defiance in it, quite consistent with his character. His notes indicate a more gentle sentiment only in the morning, before his cage is uncovered and his churlishness aroused by the sight of associates whom he chooses to consider foes. At that charmed hour he will favor his delighted audience of one with a sweet and tender strain, utterly unlike his performance at any other

time. A pining captive is an unwelcome guest in this small bird colony, and the cardinal could have his liberty at any moment. But that is not his desire. He evidently appreciates the comfort of a cage, is satisfied with his bill of fare, and has no inclination to forage for himself. The only thing he wishes is to be let alone. His dream of happiness, if put into words, would, I think, resemble the ideal of some of the human family, — a well-appointed house, having everything to please the eye and gratify the taste within and about it, and surrounded by a wall unsurmountable and impenetrable, even to the glances of the world at large.

In striking contrast with this uncivil personage is a serene and philosophic character, possessing neither the rollicking spirits of the goldfinch nor the moodiness of the cardinal. The return of the house-mistress, after a week's absence, elicits no manifestations of joy from this bird, as it does from all the others, including the cardinal. Yet, though undemonstrative, he is not without emotions. He will follow her all day, stand for an hour within an inch of the rocker of her chair, and spend half his time on her knee, watching every movement, taking occasional lunches from her fingers, and not hesitating to indulge in a nap when he feels so disposed.

The element of mischief, of caprice, and practical joking is well represented by a cat-bird; or was, until he grew unhappy and a window was opened to give him liberty. No more tricksy spirit ever dwelt in human frame: delighting in pranks, teasing the smaller birds, working confusion in desk drawers or sewing-baskets, performing a war-dance, with appropriate screams, on top of the cardinal's cage, and exulting in his helpless frenzy. This bird was not quite affectionate, not absolutely trustful; he would alight on my hand for food, being, however, so wary and alert that he was as secure from surprise as though he stood on a tree.

Easy-going amiability is the prominent characteristic of another goldfinch. He submitted meekly to the tyranny of his cage-mate, ate only when he had eaten, bathed only when he had finished, till, growing bold by success, the autocrat waxed domineering, when the victim suddenly roused himself, became aggressive, asserted his right to the conveniences of the household, and, as in human society under similar circumstances, carried everything before him.

The manners of "these our brothers" are as individual as their tempers. Nothing is more impressive than the dignity of the thrush family; no vulgar haste or fussiness, no ignoble

panic. All is tranquil repose, yet without a symptom of dullness. A stranger may approach a thrush, and he will neither flinch nor fidget until the observer becomes intrusive, when he calmly and quietly slips away. Opposed to this high-bred manner is that of the redwing blackbird, who, never still a moment, is restless and uneasy to the last degree; jumping from perch to perch, stretching one wing and then the other, jerking the tail, craning the neck, ever assuming new attitudes, and showing in every movement his unquiet spirit.

Different from each of the above in manner is the cat-bird. There is an appearance of grave repose, but it is superficial; it is the repose of the air before a tornado, of the volcano before a violent eruption. He is quiet, — he stands as still as a thrush, and looks one full in the eye; but he is alert to the tips of his toes, and a slight but significant jerk of the tail shows that he is wide awake and prepared for instant movement. Let him suspect one's intention to be hostile, and he will flash out of sight; not silently, like the thrush, but with harsh screams that fairly startle one with their violence.

To find rude, blustering, self-assertive manners we need go no farther than our city streets, which the house-sparrow has made his own.

For cool impudence and offensive intrusion upon the rights of humanity about him this bird has no equal. He is a genuine gamin, and shows the effect of life in the streets ever on a bird.

Birds not only cough and sneeze, but they dream and snore, making most distressing sounds, as if strangling. They hiccough — a very droll affair it is, too, — and they faint away. A goldfinch, spoken of above, being frightened one night, in his struggles was caught between the wires, and gave a cry like the squeak of a mouse in distress. On my hastening to his release, he slipped out into the room, and flew wildly about till he hit something and fell to the floor. He was picked up, and his fright culminated in a dead faint. The little head drooped, the body was limp, apparently perfectly lifeless, and he was laid in his cage, ready to be buried in the morning. He was placed carefully on the breast, however, and in a few minutes he hopped upon his perch, shook out his ruffled feathers, and composed himself to sleep.

One feat sometimes ascribed to man is in the case of birds a literal fact, — they can sleep with one eye open. This curious habit I have watched closely, and I find it common in nearly all the varieties I have been able to observe.

One eye will close sleepily, shut tight, and appear to enjoy a good nap, while the other is wide awake as ever. It is not always the eye towards the light that sleeps, nor is it invariably the one from the light. The presence or absence of people makes no difference. I have even had a bird stand on my arm or knee, draw up one leg, and seem to sleep soundly with one eye, while the other was wide open. In several years' close attention I have been unable to find any cause, either in the position or the surroundings, for this strange habit.

No "set old woman" is more wedded to her accustomed "ways" than are birds in general to theirs. Their hours for eating, napping, and singing are as regular as ours. So, likewise, are their habits in regard to alighting places, even to the very twig they select. After a week's acquaintance with the habits of a bird, I can always tell when something disturbing has occurred, by the place in which he is found. One bird will make the desk his favorite haunt, and freely visit tables, the rounds of chairs, and the floor, while another confines himself to the backs of chairs, the tops of cages and picture-frames. One hermit thrush frequented the bureau, the looking-glass frame, and the top of a cardboard map which had warped around till the upper edge was almost circular. On this

edge he would perch for hours, and twitter and call, but no other bird ever approached it. Still another always selected the door casing and window cornices.

Every bird has his chosen place for the night, usually the highest perch on the darkest side of the cage. They soon become accustomed to the situation of the dishes in their cages, and plainly resent any change. On my placing a drinking-cup in a new part of the cardinal's residence, he came down at once, scolding violently, pretended to drink, then looked over to the corner where the water used to be, and renewed his protestations. Then he returned to the upper perch, flirting his tail, and expressing his mind with great vigor. A few minutes passed, and he repeated the performance, keeping it up with great excitement until, to pacify him, I replaced the cup. He at once retired to his usual seat, smoothed his roughened plumage, and in a few moments began to sing. A dress of new color on their mistress makes great commotion among these close observers, and the moving about of furniture puts the tamest one in a panic.

"Besides song," says Michelet, "the bird has many other languages. Like men, he prattles, recites, and converses." The subject of birds' language is one of great interest, and I

have studied it very closely. I notice that all the birds understand certain sounds made by any one of them, even by sparrows outside, — a cry of distress, any excitement, calls for food, and especially an expression of dislike for another's song; but I have never seen any appearance of talk except between those of the same family. Two goldfinches keep up a continual chatter, with distinctly different tones for different occasions, as when a fly alights on the window near them, or a neighboring bird makes any uncommon movement. They never talk at the same time, although they often sing together, and one is much more talkative than the other. Sometimes their notes are low and their manner indifferent, as if the talk were mere desultory chat; but if anything occurs of interest in their small world the tones become animated, and in times of excitement their voices are raised almost to shrieks. After a quarrel, moreover, there is no more exchange of opinion for a long time. Further than this, I have experimented by taking one from the room, when invariably all talk ceased. I have never known one to make the peculiar sounds I have called "talk" when the other was not in the room. Robins notoriously talk together, and when one intrudes upon their neighborhood he can almost translate into English their

low words of warning and caution, and their observations upon his movements. Who that has ever lain on his back in the hay, and watched the barn swallows as they come to their nest and perch on the great beam to dress their feathers and perhaps give their quaint little song before setting out again, but is convinced that they are great chatterers! Indeed, one can hear them, as they fly through the air, not only calling to each other, but exchanging remarks, which is quite different.

To one who has watched birds it is plain that they are fond of play. A bit of string will often amuse one for a long time: he will jump sideways and drag it about in a very droll way, beat it on the floor, fly away with it, and in other ways enjoy it. A marble, or anything that rolls, will sometimes answer the same purpose. A mocking-bird delighted in a grass stalk with the seeds on. He would grasp it in the middle, hop all about his cage, lay it carefully down in one place, leave it, and then return and take it up again. He would entertain himself a half hour at a time in this manner. A cat-bird was particularly pleased with a handkerchief. If one fell to the floor he was after it in an instant, jerking it over the carpet and enjoying himself greatly. Another bird made himself happy by swinging on a spring

perch, jumping back and forth, and seeming to like the motion. The desire for amusement is also shown by a habit of throwing things down to see them drop. Several birds have liked to throw pins from the cushion, and look over to observe the fall; and a cat-bird never came near a spool without pushing it over, rolling it to the edge of desk or table, and noticing the result with interest. This is true not only of birds in a house, which may be supposed specially in need of something to pass away the hours, but I have seen sparrows amuse themselves in the same way, throwing small objects — leaf stems, I think — from a roof, and looking over to see them flutter to the ground.

One bird diverted himself after the manner of a "sportsman" hunting a fox, by chasing smaller birds from one side of a room to the other, and the more frightened he could make them the more he exulted in the "sport." He would also run the length of a cornice in a panic-stricken way, as though suddenly gone mad, stop short at the last inch, turn instantly, and repeat the performance, and he would keep it up for an hour. The fun of another, a gold-finch, consisted in turning "back-summersets." He would hang, head downward, from the roof of his cage, walk about in that position, using his bill to help, like a parrot, and at last give a

backward spring, turn completely over, and land on the floor of the cage. His cage-mate did not approve of this sort of frolic, and after mildly expressing his opinion once or twice he put an end to the gymnastics by a sharp reproof, accompanied by a twitch of one of the offender's feathers.

Most birds take deep interest in things going on about them, as any one who has watched them, wild or tame, must know. I have seen a swallow hover like a great humming-bird before a stranger, to satisfy his curiosity regarding him. Nothing shows difference of character more plainly than the various ways of gratifying curiosity. One is very cautious, and circles around a new object a long time before touching it, while another flies directly to the spot, and pounces upon it or tries it with the bill at once. Many birds are fond of looking at things outside the window, carriages, people, sparrows flying about, and falling snow or rain, while the appearance of a boy's kite in the air never fails to put the whole roomful in a fright.

Especially are birds interested in others of their kind, and they are generally ready to help with their presence and advice, if nothing else. A cry of distress will bring sympathizers from every quarter, and during several sparrow broils I have noticed, there has always been an audi-

ence, all talking, — giving advice, no doubt, — and many ready to take a hand in any sort of scrimmage. Robins, too, rush in crowds to the assistance of their neighbors.

Birds show a love of teasing in several ways, the most common being to display contempt for another's song. One of my goldfinches will assume the most indifferent air when the other begins to sing; moving to the farther end of the long perch, puffing himself out, and ostentatiously getting ready for a nap. The singer never fails to notice the offense at once, and follow up his tormentor, singing somewhat louder, till the naughty fellow deliberately puts his head under his feathers as if to sleep, when the voice rises to a positive shriek, and the offended bird stretches himself up tall, and towers above his sleepy comrade as though he would devour him.

The coolest insult I ever saw is often paid by a goldfinch to a cardinal as big as half a dozen of himself. He insisted upon alighting upon the cardinal's cage to shake himself after bathing, and, in spite of hard words from the owner, kept up the custom until sundry nips of his toes convinced the saucy goldfinch that it was not a good place to dry himself. Since then he perches close to the door of his crusty neighbor to sing, edging as near as he can, and singing

his loudest. The cardinal expresses disapproval by sharp "Tsip's" and other sounds, but when he becomes too enraged to contain himself he sings! It is certainly a strange way of showing anger. He puffs out his feathers, holds his quivering wings a little away from his sides, erects his crest, and sways his body like a Chinese mandarin in the tea-shops, only from side to side, singing all the time at the top of his voice.

The goldfinch understands the meaning of this demonstration, and it really seems to awe him, for as long as the cardinal continues it he stands meek and silent. Although fearing it would be useless, I on one occasion fastened open the door of the angry bird's cage, to put him on more equal terms with his small foe. But so far from helping matters, the goldfinch became more saucy than before, even venturing into the enemy's cage for hemp-seed which he spied upon the floor. The cardinal hurried down when he saw this; but the smaller bird was so quick in his movements that he could go in, snatch a seed, and be out before his clumsy adversary reached him. Once outside, where he knew perfectly well he would not be followed by the irate proprietor, the small rogue stood on a perch not two inches from the open door, calmly cracked and ate his seed, and then

waited for another chance to make a raid upon the coveted stores.

No one who has kept several birds needs to be told of their jealousy. In spite of infinite pains and redoubled attentions to the older resident, I have been pained to see the feeling towards a new-comer cause unhappiness, even misery, and in one case a permanent souring of temper.

It is curious to see a bird show rage. Besides the singing already spoken of, the cardinal sometimes displays it in another way. He will perch as near as possible to the wires which separate him from the goldfinch; raise the feathers of his neck all around, till they look like a ruff; lean his head far over one side, with crest down, eyes fixed on the enemy, and *one* wing quivering. This attitude of speechless wrath seems to impress the goldfinch for a moment, but at last he takes courage and begins to sing, low at first, but gradually louder, till almost shrieking, while his own wings droop and quiver, and he edges nearer and nearer to his insulter, until his swelling body fairly touches the wires. Meanwhile, upon the opening of the song the cardinal scolds his harshest, and when the goldfinch touches his wires he gives a vicious dig into his rice, which sends a volley flying, and seizes a wire in his bill as

though he would bite it off. Yet he will not avail himself of his open door. The native thrush alone, of all the birds I have watched, fails to display temper. I never saw one angry.

There is great difference in the general intelligence of birds, and so far in my studies I have found the larger ones on a higher grade in this respect. The robin, cat-bird, thrush, learn the intentions of the various members of a family towards them much more quickly than those that are smaller. These birds soon confide in me, let me do anything I like about their cages without a flutter, while the goldfinches, — although the oldest residents and very familiar at a distance, — a linnet and a chipping sparrow are frightened if I touch the cage.

That birds show selfishness I am obliged to admit. Any dainty put into the cage of one arouses the interest of all, and a big bird hovering in the air before a neighbor's residence, to discover if his grape or bit of apple is better than his own, is a queer sight. A bunch of fresh leaves in the goldfinch cage makes an excitement that would be funny, except that it is painful to see this ignoble passion so strong. To avoid trouble I always put in two bunches, one at each end of the longest perch. Neither bird can settle to one bunch lest the other is better, and so they vibrate between the two, till

the whole is eaten. Even the gentle thrush so dislikes seeing others possessed of plantain leaves that he will snatch away from another's cage any leaf that he can reach from the outside. He is very dexterous, too, flying up and seizing the protruding stem without alighting.

Birds are as prone as children to imitate what they see others do. I have noticed them particularly in the matter of bathing. I have one bird that never really bathed till he learned by seeing another. He simply "washed his face," and then passed half an hour arranging his feathers. But when a companion was put into his cage who greatly enjoyed the bath, going in all over and splashing violently, he stood and watched the proceeding with great interest, came to the perch nearest the bathing dish, looked on earnestly, and seemed to be amazed. Two or three days this went on, his interest in the thing not diminishing; and at last, after circling many times around the pan in an undecided way, dreading yet wishing to make the plunge, he finally got up his courage and jumped into the middle, — it was a shallow pan with one inch of water. Even then he hesitated, looked over to me, and called out gayly as though to say, "See what I 've done!" I answered, and in a few moments he dipped his head and began to spatter. It was evi-

dently a new experience, and he called to me again and again, and was so delighted that it was charming to see. Never since that day has he neglected the bath, and he often gets so wet that he cannot fly to his cage, four feet above, till he has shaken himself out.

Now, at this hour of noon, all four birds are sitting quietly on their perches, indulging in their accustomed midday siesta. Suddenly the goldfinch utters in soft undertone, "Seep!" There is no reply, and after a moment he speaks again, a little louder: "Peep! peep!" Across the window the cardinal, sitting motionless on his perch, now adds his voice in a low call, followed soon by a loud "Three chēērs! three chēērs!" The thrush, on the other side of the room, next strikes in gently, a genuine whisper song, keeping his eye on me to see if I observe him. At last comes the blackbird, with loud, clear "h'wa-ker-ēē!" and all four are singing like mad. Then suddenly they drop to silence. The cardinal goes down for a lunch of rice; the thrush stands swelled out, motionless, on his perch; the blackbird interests himself in the state of his feet and in stretching his wings; and the goldfinch plumes his feathers. When all these duties are performed and the cardinal has settled himself once more, there is a pause of a few moments, and the concert begins again in the same way.

Let me close with the sentiment of Emerson upon the bird: —

"In ignorant ages it was common to vaunt the human superiority by underrating the instinct of other animals, but a better discernment finds that the difference is only of less and more. Experiment shows that the bird and the dog reason as the hunter does; that all the animals show the same good sense in their humble walk that the man who is their enemy or friend does, and if it be in smaller measure, yet it is not diminished, as his often is, by freak and folly."

INDEX.

Bird feathers, 22.
characteristics, 23.
slaughter, 22, 203.
individuality, 205.
philosophy, 207.
manners, 208.
thrush, 208.
redwing blackbird, 209.
cat-bird, 209.
sparrow, 209.
sleep with one eye, 210.
regular habits, 211.
language, 212.
play, 214.
mocking-bird, 214.
cat-bird, 214, 215.
sparrow, 215.
interest in their surroundings, 216.
jealousy, 219.
rage, 219.
intelligence, 220.
robin, 220.
cat-bird, 220.
thrush, 220.
goldfinch, 220.
selfishness, 220.
Blackbird, redwing, 95.
at nesting time, 95.
the nook, 96.
the female, 97, 98.
manners, 97, 99.
bathing, 99.
washing the feet, 104.
with the young, 99.
the family broken up, 100.
notes and calls, 100.
song, 100, 102.
fondness for water, 104.
intelligence, 104.
illness, 105.
accident to the beak, 106.
want of grace, 106.
and thrush, 106.
expression of wings, 107.
reproaches, 108.
baby, 124.
Bobolinks, 134.
difference between, 134.
curious relations, 134.
Canary bird drama, 145.
marriage of convenience, 145.
opinion of her own, 145.
jealousy, 146.
desperate fight, 147.
death of the spouse, 147.
Cardinal grosbeak, 206.
morning song, 206.
and goldfinch, 217.
rage, 219.
Cat-bird (in the house), 75.
curiosity, 76.
investigating the room, 77.
on the desk, 78.
mechanical toy, 79.
Tweed savings-bank, 79.
bath tub, 80.
marble to roll, 81.
pincushion, 81.
waste-basket, 82.
praying mantis, 82.
love of teasing, 85.
and cardinal, 85.
insult, 86.
and goldfinches, 86.
learning by experience, 88.
begging for worms, 89.
rubber bands, 89.
hiding, 90.
and European song thrush, 91.
jealousy, 91.
notes and calls, 92.
mischief, 208.
play, 214, 215.
manners, 209.
intelligence, 220.
Cat-bird (wild), 63.
its chosen home, 63.

whispered song, 64.
intelligence, 65.
curiosity, 65.
humor, 66.
treatment of pigeons, 66.
settles the sparrows, 66.
evening toilet, 68.
bath, 68.
sun bath, 69.
attitudes, 69.
expressions, 70.
seeking the nest, 70.
songs and other notes, 71.
Crow, attacked by an oriole, 115.
with the king-bird, 117, 119.
among the pine needles, 118.
not know when beaten, 119.
Goldfinch (English), 35.
sauciness, 35.
with a thrush, 35.
marriage of convenience, 147.
growing tyrannical, 148.
rebellion, 148.
learning to bathe, 149.
cheerfulness, 205.
amiability, 208.
fainting away, 210.
talk, 213.
turning somersaults, 215.
insulting the cardinal, 217.
impressed, 219.
selfishness, 220.
bathing, 221.
Grasshopper under the glass, 83.
King-bird, mode of attack, 117.
assisting an oriole, 119.
Mantis, praying, 82.
Marmosets, 138.
difference, 138.
and sand-worms, 139.
opening the door, 140.
rush for the birds, 141.
Mocking-bird, change of residence, 35.
play, 214.
Oriole, Baltimore, 111.
greeting, 111.
deception, 112.
characteristics, 112.
nest, 113.
approach to nest, 113.
vigilance, 114.
the tree shaken, 114.
trouble with a crow, 115.
mode of attack, 117.
tactics, 118.
song, 119.
other cries, 120.
accident to the babies, 120.
female calls and song, 121.
first appearance of young, 121.
looks of the mother, 122.
as a drudge, 122.
the first peep, 123.
excitement in the family, 123.
two babies flown, 124.
a strange oriole, 124.
appearance of babies, 124.
cry of babies, 124.
busy times, 125.
baby's first flight, 127.
flight of number four, 127.
character of nestlings, 127.
catastrophe, 128.
flight of number five, 129.
flight of number six, 129.
nest deserted, 130.
Robin, American, 1.
cheerfulness, 1.
notes, 4.
worm-hunting, 5.
trouble with a turkey, 7.
playing a joke, 8.
lessons in worm-hunting, 9.
teaching to sing, 10.
baby, 11.
nest, 12.
song, 119.
sparrow impertinence, 199.
talk, 213.
intelligence, 220.
Ring-dove, 133.
Skylark, 135.
when let out, 136.
a bewitching dance, 137.
Sparrow, house, 153.
morning hymn, 153.
manners, 154.
nest in a spruce-tree, 154.
accident in the family, 155.
conduct of parents, 155.
murder of the infant, 156.
divorce decided upon, 157.
manner of securing it, 158.
bringing home a bride, 158.
differences, 159.
nest in the maple-tree, 163.
domestic quarrel, 164.
conduct of the cock, 164.
hiding, 165.
quickness of the female, 166.
change in affairs, 166.
cunning, 167.
stratagems, 168.
cleaning house, 169.
reappearance, 169.
going a-wooing, 170.
coquetry, 170.
another drama, 175.
a leg lost, 175.

treatment by the mate, 176.
sufferings of the afflicted, 177.
babies to feed, 177.
rivals, 178.
a formidable foe, 179.
a new position, 179.
trying to "make up," 180.
recovery and reunion, 180.
the babies out, 181.
as a tyrant, 185.
difference of opinion, 185.
starting out the family, 186.
the father assists, 187.
indifference of the brood, 188.
a youngster "answers back," 189.
a neighborly alliance, 1
an insult, 191.
philosophy, 191.
modesty of females. 192.
delight in a mob, 192.
courtship, 193.
contest with a squirrel, 194.
indifference of squirrel, 196.
introducing an owl, 198.
impudence, 199.
impertinence to a robin, 199.
play, 215.
Squirrel and sparrows, 196.
winter quarters, 197.
a year later, 197.
Swallow, talk, 214.
curiosity, 216.
Thrush, hermit, 26.
intelligence, 27.
with the pincushion, 28.
interest in the mirror, 28.
Thrush, Mexican, 34.
with the wood thrush, 34.
manners, 142.
temper, 143.
as peacemaker, 143.
a bird of one idea, 144.
trouble with the looking-glass, 144.
a blusterer, 144.
Thrush, song, European, 43.
timidity, 43.
curious performance, 44.
a ball of yarn, 45.
fear of other birds, 46.
coaxing out of the cage, 46.
dislike of a doll, 46.
alligator, 47.
inquisitiveness, 47.
waste-basket, 48.
aversion to change, 48.
taught to go home, 49.
disturbed by a chromo, 49.
intelligence, 50.
recognition of dishes, 50.
looking-glass troubles, 51.
jealousy, 51.
tameness, 52.
familiarity on one side, 52.
favorite places, 53.
attitudes, 53.
sun-bath, 54.
expressions, 55.
gait, 55.
notes and calls, 55.
song, 56.
food, 56.
passion for strings, 57.
towel fringe, 58.
Thrush, wood (wild), 13.
female, 16.
song, 16.
love of solitude, 18.
secret of hiding, 19.
how to discover, 20.
watching his ways, 20.
excitement over a cat, 21.
beauty of plumage, 22.
appearance of the young, 24.
intelligence, 25.
good temper, 25.
song in confinement, 26.
Thrush, wood (in confinement), 33.
disposition, 33.
change of residence, 33.
with the Mexican, 34.
the mocking-bird, 35.
the goldfinch, 35.
monopolizing the apple, 36.
sharing the leaf, 37.
interest in the waste-basket, 37
caught, 38.
song, 39.
spots of the breast, 39.
mystery, 39.
manners, 208.
temper, 220.
intelligence, 220.
selfishness, 221.
Woodpecker, golden-winged, 141.

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